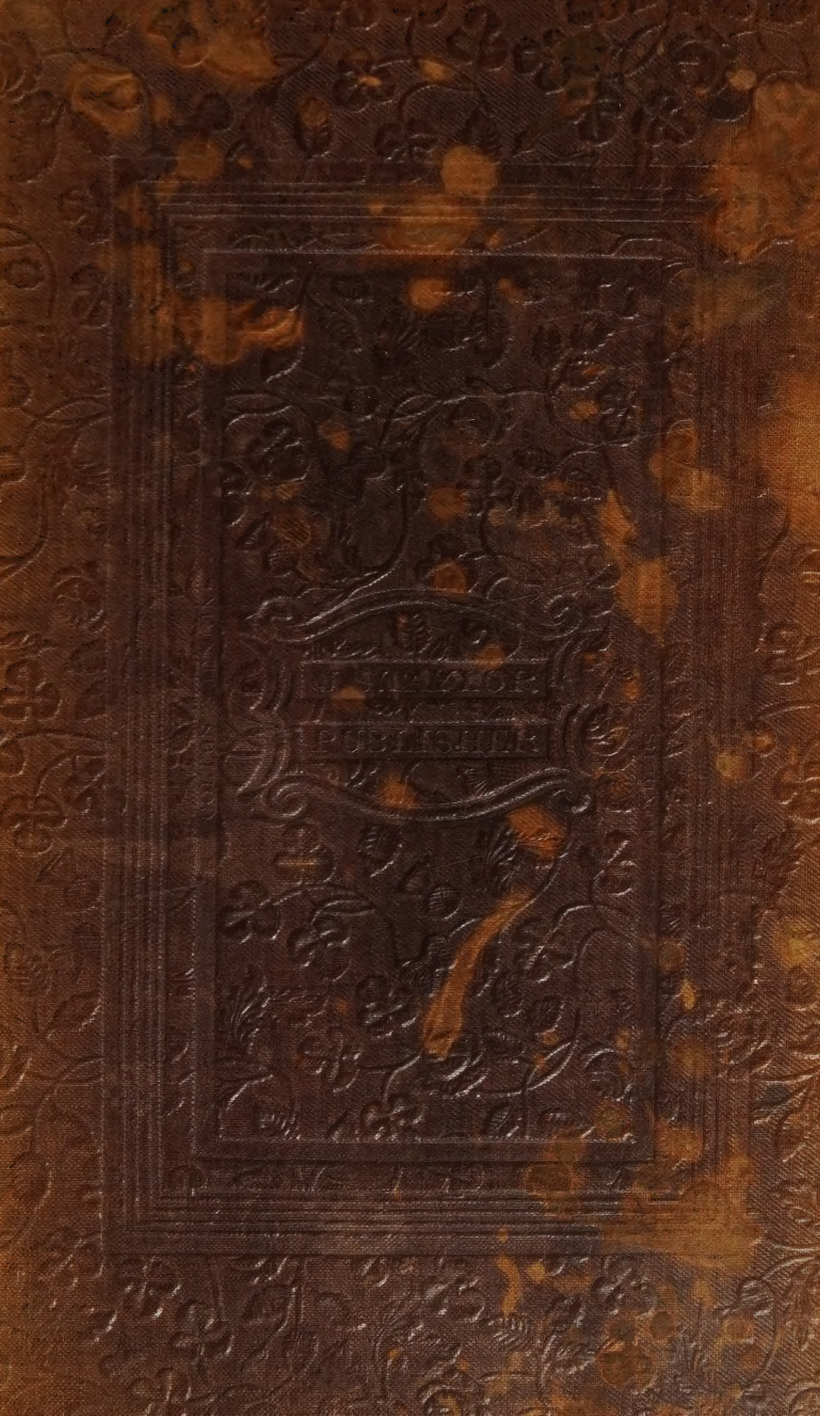

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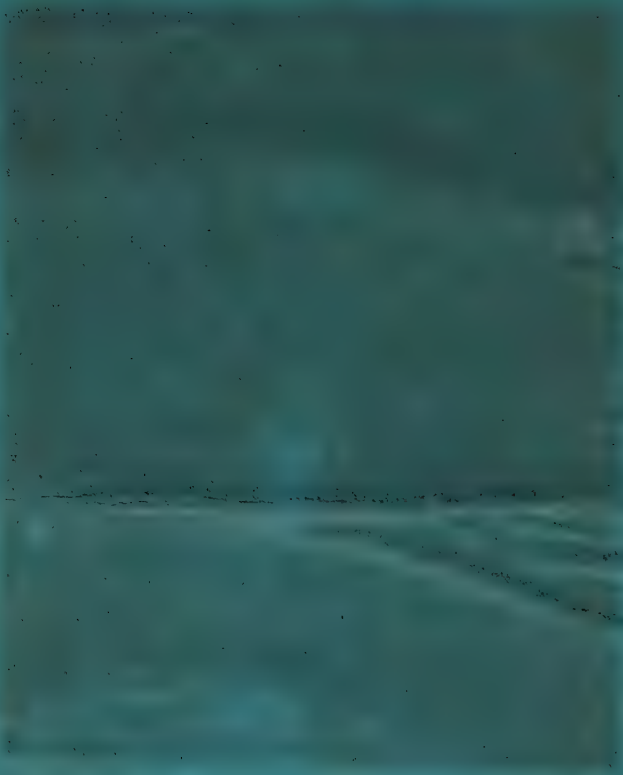

SERMONS.

By Rev. DANIEL A. CLARK,
Author of "Conference Sermons," "Church Safe," &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

"If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?"

NEW-YORK:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN S. TAYLOR,
Brick Church Chapel.
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1836.

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INTRODUCTION.

The author cannot fail to recollect with gratitude, the unexpectedly rapid sale of a former volume, and the many favourable acknowledgments he has received from its readers. Though repeatedly urged to issue a new edition of that volume, or other fruits of his pen, he has hitherto declined, except occasionally to publish sermons and essays in some of the current periodicals. But since his health has failed, and he can no longer stand in the holy place, rather than bear the agony of living to no purpose, he has summoned resolution, with the encouragement and aid of kind friends, to arrange and issue these three volumes, — including some of his former publications.

The author has still the same conviction as formerly expressed, that writings are often spoiled by too much smoothing and polishing. Hence the present volumes are permitted to go forth with those occasional roughnesses, which, it is hoped, may not give offence, but simply stir up thought, and arouse proper feeling. He is also impressed with the fact, that in the manner of *reading*, and especially of reading sermons, there is generally exhibited a most shameful and criminal deficiency. If he might be allowed a suggestion on this point, he would say with deference, let the parent, or some one selected by him, read *aloud* for the benefit of the family, after preparing himself to read with due *emphasis* and *feeling*. And as a general rule, read aloud, even when alone — remembering that impressions made at once on the ear and eye, reach the heart with double force. Let this course be prayerfully adopted, and well-written sermons, and essays, and the precious Bible itself, would not so often be regarded

as dull compositions; but their perusal would be accompanied with power from on high. That some portion of that blessed influence may attend these little volumes, and that they may not be consigned, with their author, to speedy dust and worms, is his last written prayer.

New-York, Feb. 1836.

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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

PERDITION A DARK SPOT IN THE MORAL LANDSCAPE.

Ezekiel xviii. 32.

"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God."

EVERY other doctrine of the Scriptures must be compatible with this one. God has done enough in the work of saving sinners from hell to show beyond controversy that he cannot delight in their blood. The covenant of redemption, and the descent of Jesus Christ to tabernacle in the flesh, and especially his death on the cross, must have satisfied even devils that God had no pleasure in their blood. And then, when God gave the world the Scriptures, and directed that men be pressed with the invitations of mercy, how could the truth of the text be doubted, even in the place of torment? Shall the very men whose way to hell God is hedging up, while he opens before them the portals of everlasting life—shall they have any doubt of his mercy? Every Sabbath, and every offer of pardon, and every mercy the sinner receives from the hands of God, testify to his unwillingness to destroy, and his willingness to save lost men.

And if, on the other hand, because sinners are abundantly convinced that God is *merciful*, they are brought to doubt whether he is *holy* and *just* and *true*, is there

not an assault made upon the divine character, which no ingenuous being would be willing to be charged with? May he not condemn and punish the unholy, who will not repent, while yet he does not delight in the death of a sinner?

In all governments, divine and human, the laws must be executed, and the administration of justice must be certain. If mercy interpose, it must not be *in every case*, else the law loses its sanctions, and the motives to duty are lessened. And yet in every government, there may be compassion the most warm in the heart of him who administers justice. Nor will any thing tend so much as this to honour the law and the government. When the parent, while he corrects the child, weeps over him, more is done to impress his conscience with a sense of guilt than can be accomplished by any other means. And the judge who finds it impossible to suppress his tears, while he reads to the criminal the sentence of death, makes a deep and dreadful impression on the conscience of the culprit. He puts on his chains again and goes to his dungeon a sober-thinking man.

And the same principle must operate in the divine government. God has assured us that upon some he intends to execute the full penalty of the law. And yet over these he bends with a sympathy indescribably tender, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel! how shall I make thee as Admah, how shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hidden from thine eyes." Judgment is declared to be his strange work. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. God may see the necessity of executing his law while he may wish there had not been that necessity,

and that his kingdom could be as safe and happy in administering *mercy* as in the display of justice. It is when the destruction of the sinner is viewed in itself, separated from the bearing it may have upon the general welfare of the universe, that God has no pleasure in it. Of this we shall be satisfied when we consider what is implied in the ruin of a soul.

I. *It is painful to see such noble affections misplaced.*—The very spirit that falls under the divine condemnation, and goes to endure the outer darkness, and gnawing worm, is capable of putting forth the best affections. The sinner was created capable of loving the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with all the subjects of God's holy kingdom, his law, his gospel, and his service. True, he could not have comprehended entirely their nature, but he could have known enough to have risen to the most ardent glow of affection. Though he could not have loved as angels do, could not have glowed with the ardour of cherubim and seraphim, yet could he have reached a sublimity of holy emotion which would have rendered him glorious in their eyes, and entitled him to a station high and honourable among the hosts of heaven. The *Saviour* he could have loved with peculiar affection, such as angels cannot feel. In the strain of praise which told of dying love, they would have yielded him the highest note; and probably when ages of ages had given him opportunity to improve his powers in the salubrious climes of heaven, there might have appeared far less difference between his powers and theirs than now, and eternity might at length have seen him rising through a thousand grades till he had filled a station by their side, and had beamed with an ardour of attachment not inferior to theirs.

But these noble affections are all misplaced. Neither God nor the holy subjects of his kingdom have any share in his affections. He glows with no pure desire; he sees nothing in God, nor in what *he* loves, that in his account has any worth. That which charms the angels and enraptures all the holy family has nothing in it that can move one affection. His own polluted self, his foul person and ruined character, engrosses in his eye all the loveliness in the universe. He can hate most cordially that which good beings love. He calls home every affection, and becomes himself a little world, engrossing every care, every wish, and every hope. Thus can he love himself supremely, while all others consider him the essence of deformity.

Now can any suppose that God has pleasure in seeing such noble affections so misplaced? Would he not rather delight to be their object, and satisfy their immense capacities with his own immensity. We shall be still more deeply impressed with the sentiment of the text on reviewing again the state of the lost sinner to see

II. *Such keen sensations tortured.*—When God shall execute his law upon the sinner, every sense, both of body and mind, will become an inlet of misery. The body will be fuel for the flames, and, if we can learn any thing from Scripture, will welter in brimstone and fire forever. The rich man lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torment, and begs a drop of water to cool his tongue, while between him and heaven there is an impassable gulf. We read, "that they shall gnaw their tongues for pain," "their worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched."

And while the body thus suffers, the soul will be the inlet of another species of misery not less dreadful. It will be subject to envy, wrath, shame, guilt, disappoint-

ment, and despair. And all these corroding passions will live commensurate with the duration of the soul. To see heaven happy, and heaven will be forever happy, will feed the flames of envy. The quarrel continuing between God and the sinner will forever produce new sensations of wrath. The law continuing in full force, with all its dreadful sanctions, will fill the soul with guilt that can never abate, and this guilt will produce correspondent shame. The memory alive to recollection, will perpetuate the sensation of disappointment, while the certainty that God remains unalterably true, will render despair eternal. Thus will there be some fuel to feed the flames of every passion, while these passions will corrode the mind and fill the whole soul with misery.

Every new inlet of light will kindle anew the fires of the pit, while, till the judgment, the still increasing number of convicts will exhibit living testimony that God is resolved to be respected and loved by all his intelligent subjects, or treat them as outlaws in his kingdom. And when the pit shall be full, and every cavern shall ring with the howlings of despair, it will be seen that just enough are lost to express suitably God's everlasting resentment of sin, "and the smoke of their torment shall ascend up forever and ever," as a living testimony of his unchangeable holiness, justice, and truth. At their dreadful expense the righteous will forever cry Hallelujah.

Now to see such sensations tortured while they might have been the inlets of pleasure unspeakable, must be a sight which can have nothing in it calculated to please Jehovah. He is a God of tender compassion; possesses bowels of mercies. God feels when his creatures suffer, as much more sensibly than we feel as his heart is more

tender and his soul more benevolent. Hence he is represented as moved by the entreaties of his people, and is said to avenge his elect, who cry day and night unto him. How can such a being have any pleasure in the miseries of the damned? But when we see

III. *Such great expectations disappointed*, the doctrine of the text is still more firmly established. The sinner on whom we have fixed our eye, was born perhaps a child of promise. Over his very cradle his parents planning his future course, imagined that they saw opening before him a luminous and useful track. They assigned him first earthly distinctions, and then a crown of life. Perhaps he was the subject of many prayers, and consequently of many hopes. As he advanced in his course there kindled up great expectations in his own breast; he set out to be great below and greater still above. Perhaps his early life promised much, and his hopes far outwent his prospects. His friends and neighbours had their expectations raised it may be to an amazing height. And in the mean time his Maker, (for his property in us must not be forgotten) had a right to calculate on his future usefulness and greatness. He had made him a noble spirit, furnished him with abundant light and means, and watched his opening genius with more than paternal solicitude. He had formed him fit for the noblest service, and why had he not a right to calculate on his future greatness? I do not mean that God could be disappointed or could be grieved, in the sense that we may, but the Scriptures do warrant us to say in reference to a case like this, "It repented God that he had made man upon the earth and it grieved him to his very heart." How dreadful that man should so conduct himself as to extort a sigh like this from the bosom of his Maker, thus, as it were, defeating the great end

of his being, and laying prostrate every hope that hung upon his existence.

Now view the man in misery, and see all these expectations lost, and for a moment weep over him. He meant to wear a crown, but found a halter; he aspired to a throne, but reached a gibbet; he hoped for heaven, but sunk to hell. He intended to be an heir of God, but inherited everlasting burnings. He aspired to become an angel of light but became a fiend of darkness. How dreadful to see such hopes withered, such reasonable expectations blighted by the frosts of the second death. How can there be in such an object any thing that can fill the heart of God with pleasure? Were it the seat of malevolence instead of mercy, it could hardly fail to weep over such costly ruins. The unexpected extinction of a thousand suns, would not exhibit equal hopes extinguished. God could light a thousand more and thus repair the breach; but souls he never will annihilate, nor build again their ruins; then how can God have any pleasure in the death of him that dieth?

IV. *We contemplate him again with still deeper regret to see such useful talents lost.*—View some great man now in torment. While on earth his spirit, although cumbered with a dying body, exhibited amazing enterprise. He could count the stars and measure the diameter and distance of every planet. He could conceive the noblest projects, and trace to its final result every enterprise. Now free such a soul from its cumbrous clay, give it angel's wings, light well its track, let its powers grow and enlarge through eternity, and what could it not achieve? Conceive of Locke or Newton now in hell, after exploring every labyrinth of the moral and the physical world. Or if men so heavenly in contemplation may not be mentioned in connection with

hell; think of Hume, and Voltaire, and Bolingbroke, men of noble minds, but who hated the Son of God. See them in torment. Had they been as good as they were great, how useful! And must their gigantic minds dwindle to the stature of a dwarf, and only be to be degraded! What a pity! What an evil! What a loss! What a loss to themselves! Their greatness but prepares them to be miserable, while it might have made them happy. What a loss to all heaven! There their noble spirits would have found employments suited to their nature. What noble projects of holy ambition might they have originated! What inspiration might such spirits have breathed into the songs of heaven! What new discoveries of God and truth might they have made in the clear light of that celestial world! What anthems might they have invented! What strains of Hallelujah! How a soul, so noble in its structure, could swell and sweeten the music of the heavenly choir! Imagine it redeemed from hell, and joined to the choir of heaven, as a soft sweet viol, tuned to please an angel's ear, and swelling every note it sings to the sweetest, softest melody, and what a pity, that such a viol should be converted into fuel, and feed the fires of the pit. And if you suppose every spirit of equal dimension, and differing only in the structure of its clay organs; then suppose that the ten thousands who have gone to despair are ransomed and joined as so many well-tuned instruments to the music of that happy world, and what a revenue of praise would redound to God? Who can view the subject in this light and not feel pained that souls must perish? "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Oh, the cursed tragedy of the fall,

which placed noble spirits where they are utterly lost For they can be of no use to each other in the place of misery. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Were there accumulated in hell all the noblest talents of the created universe, they could not escape the hand of justice. They could neither bridge the gulf that partitions hell from heaven, nor extinguish the fires that consume them. So satisfied of this was the rich man, that he begged he might never see his brethren in that place of torment. If then the noblest talents would be useless in hell, and could be so well employed in heaven, what a loss is the damnation of a soul? And why will not the loss, although it would have been a greater loss to save them, impenitent, be felt forever? If any government should be under the necessity of imprisoning for life its noblest geniuses, would not the loss be felt and be deplored by the very monarch who barred their prison. Yes, and God will be sensible forever of the loss of talents in perdition, and will forever view that world as a dark spot in his creation, although rendering the remainder more beautiful. How then can he have any pleasure at all in the death of him that dieth? And we shall be convinced of this truth when we have taken one more view of the lost sinner and see

V. *Such a noble vessel polluted.* He was calculated to be a vessel of honour, prepared unto glory, and might have been the everlasting recipient of eternal mercy. How largely might he have received the overflowings of infinite benevolence! And if the soul had perpetually enlarged, and been kept full of love and joy and peace, what a rich and lovely treasure would such a spirit have been? Angels would pay respect to such a soul, and God himself would be pleased. But the vessel is polluted

"The gold has become dim and the most fine gold changed." If you should see a golden goblet filled with the defilements of a sink, how incongruous! how repulsive to the sight! But how much more disgusting to see a heaven-born soul filled with the corruptions of sin! If it should be our destiny to be lost we shall be forever disgusted at ourselves; and angels and God will view us with eternal loathing; devils, our companions in misery, will despise us and themselves much more. The lost spirit will be the most filthy object in the universe. God will be forever happy, but his joy, his life, his pleasure, must be in other objects; and if the deity may not be pained, so neither may he be pleased with the scenes of the pit; and will he not cover it with a cloud of smoke which shall obscure its defilements from the vision of the blessed?

Remarks.—1. God will not damn any who do not oblige him to do so in order to secure the honour of his name and kingdom: judgment is his strange work. If he takes no pleasure at all in the death of him that dieth, how can we believe that any will perish whose eternal ruin is not necessary to show the justice, the truth, and the holiness of God, to vindicate his law, or honour his government? None, then, of my readers will perish but such as make themselves vile, and continue obstinately disobedient, resisting the influences of the Holy Spirit, till God gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, and swears in his wrath that they shall not enter into his rest. And even such he will spare as long as the good of his holy kingdom will permit.

2. Hence we see why sinners who will finally be lost are so long kept out of hell. God abhors the work of destruction, and will spare them till there is no hope of their repentance, and even when hope is gone, may spare

them still, unless the good of his kingdom require their immediate destruction. And I know not that any sacred text has assured us that sinners shall perish as soon as they are given over to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. The probability is that they are spared longer, that God may appear infinitely gracious while he destroys them.

3. He not only spares them, but follows them with the invitations of his mercy. He gives them line upon line and precept upon precept. Minister after minister is raised up to proclaim to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. He stands and pleads with them "till his head is wet with the dew and his locks with the drops of the night." He seems reluctant to destroy them, and so varies the means and arguments that urge them to repentance. He tries every gracious method to move them, sends judgments and mercies, and, when all means have failed and they are joined to their idols, he lets them alone.

4. No more will finally be lost than is absolutely necessary. No more than just enough to clear his character from impeachment, and his law and government from reproach.

5. There must be something very odious in sin, since God so abhors it, that he will destroy men who do not repent of it and are not sanctified, although he hates the work of destruction. While we thus see the heart of God moved with compassion for perishing men, and as it were grieving at the necessity of executing upon them the rigours of his law, and yet determined upon that execution, it seems forever to settle the question, that "sin is that abominable thing which his soul hateth." For that some will perish after all that has appeared of he divine compassion, there can be no doubt. Divine

veracity is pledged for the destruction of all those, "that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." And the divine character must suffer, if finally the whole human family should be saved. Hence every honest man, as he reads his Bible, is there taught to expect an event, which, undesirable as it may be in itself, is rendered necessary by the obstinacy of sinners. And if it should be inquired, Why does not God save all by sanctifying their hearts? We can only answer, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." Perhaps the excellency of the law could never be so fully seen as in the destruction of sinners, and perhaps heaven could never be so happy, were not its joys contrasted with the miseries of the second death. Be these things as they may, it is evidently the purpose of God, that, in the ruin of the lost, sin shall show its odious nature as it never did before. It has compelled Jehovah to kindle the fires of tophet, and as he shall be seen to feed their flames forever, that he may suitably express his abhorrence of sin, there will be none in all the universe who will question its odiousness. As much as men love sin now, they will yet be brought to see that it is a viper whose fangs convey death to the soul. And it will yet appear hateful even to the lost.

6. The weakest saint need not fear but that God will bring him to heaven. Justice will not require him to condemn any of his people, and he will condemn no more than is necessary—no more than justice requires. Not one that has ever believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, need have any apprehension that he will be lost. God will find enough who have rejected the Saviour to the last to answer in their destruction all the purposes of his vindictive justice.

7. We need have no apprehensions that any decree

of God will keep men out of heaven, who are willing to comply with his terms of salvation. God has always felt as he felt in the days of Ezekiel. If so, there never was a time when he could make any cruel decree that will now oblige him to do what his soul abhors. His decrees secure the salvation of as many as it will comport with the best good of his kingdom to save. Hence none need be afraid to believe lest some decree of God should still cut them off from life. Indeed the decrees of heaven are the purposes of love. Had there been no purposes of election he must have condemned all our race. To prevent this he resolved to make some willing in the day of his power.

8. As it is a fact revealed, that some will perish, and as their ruin is a thing in which God takes no pleasure; and as we cannot doubt but that God will still be forever happy, so we see that his people may forever sing and rejoice, while they shall know that some of their fellow-men are forever miserable, and shall see the smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever. With the limited views we have now it would seem that it must make us unhappy; but the saved will see more clearly than we can at present the necessity of those dreadful measures, and they will not wish nor dare to suppress their hallelujahs.

They will not be destitute of sympathy, nor look even with cold indifference at the miseries of the lost, but so supremely will they regard the glory of God, and so distinctly will they see the necessity of vindictive punishments that they will be satisfied.

And now will not this subject urge sinners to repentance? If God, in view of the worth of the soul, is so unwilling to destroy it, and yet will proceed to destroy if men will not repent, then they ought to repent.

He will surely reverse the doom of all who do repent. He is waiting on sinners that they may save him the necessity of destroying them. He will be glad, then, to see the prodigal turning his eye towards his father's house, and will haste to meet him, and will pardon him and love him. He will be glad to make you happy. He has no pleasure in your destruction, but will be glad and happy in your salvation. He has always been blessed, since there were creatures, in making them blessed, and will be as joyful in blessing you as he has been in blessing others.

9. How infatuated is the inference that men of corrupt minds have drawn from these expressions of the divine compassion; that since God does not delight in the destruction of sinners he will destroy none, he has asserted the contrary; that some shall go away into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth; that the smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever; that their worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched; that where Christ is they can never come; that it had been better for them if they had never been born; that they shall depart accursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Still, having asserted that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, they will believe that his threatenings mean nothing; that he will falsify his truth to gratify his mercy; will let his *word*, and his *law*, and his *honour* perish, because he does not delight to make his creatures miserable. That system of universal salvation thus built professedly on the mercy of God is the most impious system that the enemy of souls has ever fabricated; oh, it is the cold and bloody climax of depravity; it offers to God an open insult; it would turn his own truth against himself, and breed confusion and war in his own councils.

SERMON II.

THE SANCTUARY.

Psalm xx. 1, 2.

"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee, send thee help from the sanctuary and strengthen thee out of Zion."

THE house of God is the emblem of all the divine institutions. With its prosperity has ever been identified the blessedness of that community who have made it their rallying point. It told the state of Israel under the varied scenes of prosperity and adversity. When its treasury was full and its altars in repair, and the daily sacrifices were offered, and the court was guarded from pollution, and the priests consecrated themselves, and the tribes came up, the tribes of the Lord to the testimony of Israel, then it went well with the people of God. But when the devoted house of prayer was made a den of thieves, and the Levites had gone every one to his field, and the buyer and the seller, and the money-changers occupied the consecrated sanctuary, then had the glory departed.

And in all the ages since in lands where the true God is known, if at a single glance one would learn the state of any people, let him follow the sound of the church-going bell and look into their sanctuary. There he can read their condition in unequivocal lines. I would lie without a roof to cover me, and make my bed in the clefts of the rock, but must find my way to the house of the Lord, and fix my dying grasp on the horns of his altar. All that is thriving and healthful in any section of Christendom is suspended on the in-

terest taken in the house of God; and if things are not prosperous, and men would see their captivity brought back, they must seek their help in the sanctuary, and be strengthened out of Zion. God is the only source of their help and their salvation. They may try all other means first, as many a wretched people have done, but they will only pine away in their bondage till they build the house of the Lord.

But why—inquires that multitude, who have no confidence in the over-ruling providence of a wise and holy God—why must help come from the sanctuary?

I answer, I. *It is the place where God's honour dwells.* When Israel would have the help and guidance of Jehovah, they made application at the temple where his glory was seen in the holy place, and where he had appointed to respond to their supplications.

If famine, or war, or pestilence preyed upon them, their immediate resort was to the temple. I know that under the gospel dispensation there is less of the *visible* and the *tangible* in religion, than in the times of Israel, yet is there none the less of the reality. We have as firm an assurance, as had the ancient church, that God is present with his people, and fills the sanctuary with his glory, and that we may with the same assurance apply for help at the place where his honour dwells. And where is that place found rather than where his gospel is proclaimed, and his people congregated, and his ordinances administered, and his everlasting covenant ratified with his chosen, and his sanctifiying Spirit sent down to cleanse and to purify? What place can he favour more? Where make a richer deposite of his glory? Where rather lend a propitious ear to the cries of his people? At his sanctuary we may calculate to meet with God, and the people who cut themselves off from that

holy place can expect no help in their straits and their distresses. Had some wayward tribes of Israel refused to have any connection with the tabernacle and the temple, that tribe must have been without any light or guidance from Heaven. The history of the ten tribes is in proof. Refusing to repair to the place where God had appointed to meet them, he met them *no-where*, would not respond to their cries, or guide them in the day of trouble. They wandered in darkness as the blind grope at noonday.

And wherein is the case altered now? The people who forsake the sanctuary, or leave others to sustain and enjoy its worship, are without God and without hope in the world, and their conduct will soon tell on their character and their condition. There will some plague await them that will be entailed to their children, and portray their folly at an hour too late perhaps for them to become wise. When the captives hanged their harps upon the willows of Babylon, they remembered the sanctuary, how things prospered with them, when the "tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to the testimony of Israel." But they had neglected the institutions of Heaven too long, and the decree had gone out, that most of that generation should die in their bondage. The enemy had been advertised of their mistake, and tauntingly said, "Sing us one of Zion's songs." And their despondingly reply, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land," portrays the misery of that people *in gospel times* that go not for help to the sanctuary. They must waste away in their miseries, till they shall know and their children after them, how terribly God can avenge himself on his enemies.

II. The house of God is *the place of united and fer-*

vent prayer. We hazard nothing in saying, that all who pray meet there. Such cannot voluntarily and habitually absent themselves from the place where God has appointed to meet them, and hold communion with them. And they come to pray and unite their prayers and the promise of God is, that whatever they shall ask it shall be done for them.

The infidel only will doubt, whether prayer has efficacy. God's promise to hear, and the believing assurance that God has heard him in the time accepted, and in the day of salvation has succoured him, begets confidence in the use of prayer. And its increased efficacy, when *united* and *fervent*, and the assurance that it will have *unity* and *fervency* in the sanctuary, point out that place as the source of their help in the hour of danger and of suffering. Any privilege but the immediate smiles of God, I would dispense with sooner than have no share in the prayers of God's people offered in the holy place. I would be without the means of self-defence, without the protection of law, and without a shelter for my head at night, but should not dare to be cut off from an interest in the prayers of the sanctuary. Let no shower or dew fall on my territory, or breeze fan my habitation, or genial sun warm me; but let me not be excluded from the health-bearing influence of the house of prayer. Others can go to their farms or their merchandise, or their journeys, or their book-keeping on the Lord's day, and let the prayers of the sanctuary go. But if there does not come a blight over their fading hopes, and they do not find that moth and rust corrupt their treasures, then we have mistaken the ways of God. We shall watch to see what destiny overtakes their property and their children after the lapse of a few years. If facts may testify, the interests of the present life as well as

the life to come depend on the identity we establish between them and the supplications of the house of prayer. The prompt and faithful supporter and constant attendant upon the sanctuary may calculate to prosper. "Them that honour me I will honour." The less frequent attendance and the less prompt and generous support may be associated with a kind of paralysed and stationary prosperity. "To the froward thou wilt show thyself froward." The entire neglect will be the harbinger of darkness and decay. "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Neither prosperity, nor character, are sure, where there is wanting the guardianship of prayer. Not the pointed rod which turns away the lightnings, answers a purpose more kind in the natural, than prayer in the moral world.

III. The house of God is *the radiant point of sanctifying truth*. It was the prayer of the Lord Jesus for the destined heirs of salvation, "Sanctify them through thy truth." And God has revealed it as his purpose, "By the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Hence from the lips of the *living preacher* go out those doctrines that operate to sanctify the hearts of men. And who dare hope that society can prosper, where no hearts are sanctified? "Ye are the salt of the earth." A whole unregenerate family constitutes a very dark house, where insubordination kindles many a fire; and a town, or county, or state, where there were none regenerated, would be an unmanageable community. Society owes more than it will acknowledge to the influence of piety. It lays upon men a restraint even where the number of the pious is small, that is productive of more peace and order and prosperity, than all other means combined. Survey those lands, where no sanctifying religion operates to mould the manners, and fix the principles, and restrain

the passions of ungodly men. They are desolated. The passions excited, with no power present to tame or restrain them, spread a destruction wide and wasteful as human power can generate. After this survey, if you do not feel glad that your lot is cast into a gospel land, then will we abandon the argument and help you lay the temple prostrate. At one glance you will see a religion that eats up its population like a pestilence. At another you will see prevailing falsehood, and fraud, and theft, till no man sees another in whom he places confidence. Domestic happiness, and conjugal fidelity, and parental and filial regard, are things for which their language has not a name. And everywhere, where the gospel is not, there prevails a government that rules with a sceptre of iron. The hardest despotism is rendered necessary by the absence of moral restraints. If *piety must be or misery*, there must be that truth which sanctifies, and the sanctuary whence that truth issues. Throw prostrate the altar of God, and there will be no power found, that can sustain the sanctifying doctrines of revelation. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The house of God ever has been and must be the grand receptacle of light from heaven, and thence it issues to restrain the passions, and mould the manners, and repair with the divine blessing the ruins of the apostacy.

IV. The instruction of God's house is the *grand agent in the formation of public sentiment.*

I now refer to an influence that goes out from that holy place, to affect all men whether they will or will not be controlled by that influence. To the ungodly public sentiment is an irresistible law. You could bind the thief and the robber by it. Surround them with only purity of sentiment, and you would make

them honest. No man can habitually do what all about him disapprove. The most depraved would be perfectly wretched, embosomed in a holy community, till they could break from their prison, and find some fastness in the mountains, where they could associate with men of their own stamp. Human laws are weak and inoperative, but as they are sustained by public sentiment; murder is committed with impunity in those lands where a public depraved sentiment is stronger than law. I would not give a straw for that defence that law holds out in the absence of a correct public opinion to sustain it. And there is no means powerful like the house of God in the formation of that opinion. There issue thence not merely the doctrines that sanctify, but the sub-principles that moralize, and mould, and restrain the public mind. And this influence it exerts not merely upon the sabbath assembly, but the men that despise the control of principles that either God or man can enforce. The men who attend the sanctuary bear out into society and act out in their deportment its principles; and others catch the moralizing influence and spread it wider and still wider over the surface of an apostate and degenerate community, till the whole mass is leavened. Hence that portion of society which stand aloof from the house of God, and perhaps gnash their teeth at its holy solemnities, are blessed through its influence. It bears obliquely upon them, but is mighty like no other law they listen to. It gives them indirectly all their civil privileges, the peaceable possession of their rights, security of life and exemption from midnight depredations and from hourly oppressions. It sets a watch about them at the expense of others, a watch which they should be ashamed to let their fellow-men sustain alone, but without which socie-

ty would be a den of thieves. When we say of any one that he is a shameless fellow, what more can we say to give him the lowest character? But to become shameless, what is it but to hold public sentiment in utter contempt? It is this that keeps our world from becoming a shameless community and for this kind guardian of our best earthly interests every man is indebted to the sanctuary.

V. The house of God *sustains all the other civilizing and healthful institutions.* Identified with it are a preached gospel and the ministry of reconciliation. These all sustain each other. And hence the sin of disturbing, with controversy and disunion, a regular sanctuary-going people, is one of no ordinary magnitude. The Sabbath too is sustained by the sanctuary. When or where was there ever a Sabbath kept by a people who were regardless of the public worship of God? Will there be a Sabbath in the private circle, where there is no solemn Sabbath-keeping assembly and the inspiration of the church-going bell is not felt? No, no. Trace the world over, and no such thing can be found. If men tarry at home, they will be about their secular concerns, and the day will be amalgamated with the days not sanctified. Hence in those lately dark places of the earth, where they have recently got up a Sabbath, they have simultaneously erected them a sanctuary, and the one sustains the other. And all the means of education stand on the same basis. Schools, academies and colleges owe their very existence to their connection with the house of God. The ministers of religion have ever sustained these institutions, and they perish, sure as the frosts of autumn strip the wood of its foliage, soon as they aim at independence on the higher institutions of religion. After the darkest

times, when learning seemed to have taken its flight from the earth, its embryo was found to have been sustained in the retreats of the priesthood. The retributions of heaven have developed its purpose, that religion and science be indissolubly yoked to the sanctuary, as their foster-mother. And the evidence on this point is brought to our very doors. In those districts of our regular Sabbath-keeping congregations, where the population have abandoned the sanctuary, their schools decline, and the *merest being*, that has impudence enough to apply, will be entrusted with the immortal interests of their children. It is common as life, to find some low-minded foul-mouthed Sabbath-breaker immured in the schools in those districts, which are not represented in the Sabbath assembly. And why expect it otherwise? Men will not look far above their own standard to find a teacher for their children? They will not wish one whose example reproves their own practice, and whose creed reprobates their infidelity. Now, let a whole town become like one of these abandoned districts, and its schools, if any thing that deserves the name remains, will all be of the same character. A palpable darkness comes over the whole community. All improvement of intellect is undervalued, and the people verge towards heathenism by sure and rapid strides. A coarseness of attire and a clownishness of manners and the growth of all the low and vulgar vices, close in now upon the retreat of mind and morals.

And in the mean time men suffer in their *interest* ten times the cost of sustaining the gospel. Restraint is removed from vice, and the enemies of virtue, sustained by a perverse public sentiment, walk undisguised their guilty round of midnight depredations. Vice, that law was invented to punish, claims its protection. Acts of

inebriation, and lust, and profanity, and falsehood, and every other daring outrage upon the laws of God and the peace of society are at length, perhaps, unblushingly committed, rendering insecure every interest of man, temporal and spiritual. The prudent man must now expend, upon the vices of his children, many times the sum that would have nobly sustained the gospel institutions. But, alas! he withheld his support from these to buy his offspring the means of their eternal undoing. He saved the price of helping to build the sanctuary, and the pittance required to support the ministry, and equip his family for the occupancy of their pew; and, added to these, he saved all the earnings of the Sabbath-day, but he saved it to put it into a bag with holes; to bequeath it to an infidel, a debauched and profligate offspring. If a very small portion of the estate had been expended for their religious education, and they had acquired some knowledge of God, and a conscience rectified by his word, they might have been men, and possessed more than the virtues of a father, and been entrusted with his estate and the honours of his house, to hand down his name and his praise to unborn generations. But the self-abused father now on his dying-bed sees nothing else to do but put his large estate into the purse of vagabonds where it will evaporate like the dew of morning, or rot and breed corruption, and carry death through the whole field of its pestiferous exhalations.—It does not bless his sons, but renders them the more capable of being incurably profligate. The merest poverty, depriving them of the means of beastly indulgence, might have begotten hope of their redemption. But the poor father must now disinherit his children, or totally damn them. And in the mean time through his money and his heirs pours out pesti-

lence upon society, and generates a plague to operate the ruin of unborn generations. But that father has only himself to blame. His son formed the best character he could with the means his father furnished him. Among these means there was no sanctuary, nor Sabbath, nor ministry, nor valuable library, nor school, nor domestic piety, nor parents' holy example, to give him character and virtue, and render him a man. And while this individual loss is going on, by the sacrilege of the sanctuary, there is a gradual and yet perceptible sinking of the interest of the whole community. The original population are perishing. And no change of inhabitants will alter circumstances for the better. For the man of decent habits who has any character or interest to lose will not take up his residence in a territory so desolate and approaching evidently towards a still grosser desolation. Sinking property will ever be held above its value till it reaches its lowest price. Hence no exchange of population will be for the better, but all for the worse. They may get rid of many a low and mean and troublesome family, but must invariably receive in exchange the very dregs of some other ill-fated and miserable community. It will now infallibly result that every inch of territory is subjected to perpetual depreciation. Had the town sustained the sanctuary at any price, and from no other motives but to keep up the value of its lands, it would have told well on their interests. But the day of their prime has gone by, and a public sentiment is generated that is adverse to that only measure that would cure their calamities. It may be that a single individual of large interest would do well as a worldly calculator to build a sanctuary, and establish a ministry, and institute a Sabbath. He would thus secure his heirs from

ruin and his interest from prolonged and fatal depreciation. The very best sections of christendom would run precipitately back to heathenism, only break down the house of God. Who but *heathen* can be expected to set any price on *heathen territory*, upon habitations which have become infested with a moral plague, and fields over which there blow perpetually the withering and the deadly blasts of a burning desert. And there is fled in the mean time about all that rendered life valuable. Conjugal fidelity, and parental tenderness, and filial confidence and duty begin to be more scarce and less valued than in Sabbath and sanctuary times. And where are now the family altar, and the social bible-reading, and the evening fire-side hymn, and the respect for age, and the kind attention to the poor and the houseless; where all the precious endearments of home? And where the authority to put down iniquity? And the wholesome public sentiment to sustain virtuous deportment, and guard individual rights, and cradle into calmness the tumult of riot? All these disappear along with respect for the sanctuary and attendance upon the ordinances and institutions of religion. It is not in the nature of things, and evidently is not the design of Providence, that these healthful principles shall survive the moment when the bittern and the owl have their home in the old weather-beaten and time-worn sanctuary. And I need not say that all heathen lands are destitute of the public sentiments and the humanizing principles that bless mankind and that lie at the foundation of social happiness. And facts assure us that a territory that *has been* Christian can run back to heathenism rapidly as time can speed and virtue decline. Hence those who have made up their minds to dispense with gospel institutions must calculate

on a diminution of their catalogue of comforts, beyond what any miserable people have presumed, till they had made the awful experiment. Could the people have known where flourished the seven churches of Asia,—could they have *dreamed* what a desolation would sweep over them, laying waste scores of generations, they would have taken the warning given them, and not have suffered the candlestick to be removed out of his place. And could any abandoned section of christendom have known, ere they parted with the gospel, how soon all their comforts would flee, they would have made one more dying effort, and would have perished if they must by the horns of the altar. And even now if there could be awakened a pulsation of spiritual life, the rock would rise from the quarry, and the timber come down from the wood, and the sanctuary lift its spire, and the "church-going bell" utter hints of salvation through all that dreary territory of death. Men grow poor by robbing God. There inevitably follows the abandonment of the gospel a train of litigations and bankruptcies, and imprisonments and divisions, which no human power can control. Some solitary families may seem for a time to thrive, may grow wealthy through the vices of the people, or because they had no share in procuring the desolation, and are not included in the ruin. But even these, unless they flee soon from the midst of such a Sodom, will become partakers of her plagues. They will see their children contaminated, and vile encroachments upon the stillness of their Sabbaths, and the peacefulness of their evenings, and the innocent enjoyments of their interest. They must send away their children to be educated, and send out their capital from the desolated territory, or employ it contraband, in distilleries, and grog-shops, and usury, the only institutions that flourish

in the absence of the gospel; and then God will curse their estate, and curse their children with it, and their good name, till they and theirs become amalgamated with the surrounding moral ruins. Thus, when the sanctuary is let go, all goes. Men find their counsels turned into foolishness, and they pay a tribute to vice twenty times the assessments of virtue. Hence, when men imagine themselves unable to bear the expense of divine institutions, they should inquire if they be able to live without them.

VI. From the house of God are selected the subjects of his grace.

Those only who frequent the sanctuary are at all likely to be regenerated. We have pronounced it the radiant point of sanctifying truth. And it is truth, we must not forget, in the lips of a living ministry that God has pledged himself to bless. "By the foolishness of preaching he saves them that believe." When our Lord had commissioned his apostles, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he promised, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Thus *the gospel that they would carry*, and that would sound from their lips, and that of their successors, was to be the grand instrument of salvation. In connection with this divine promise, facts assure us, that when God sends a revival among a people, the subjects of it are generally taken from sanctuary-going families:—"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." —If others in such a period come round, and seem interested, and are awakened, still seldom do they make their way to Jesus Christ. More generally you see them, soon as the revival is over, returning back to their Sabbath breaking and their cups, like "the dog to his

vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire," and we hear not from them till perhaps another revival summons them again to come and gaze upon the moving scene. But those who give evidence of renewed hearts are more generally from the people who have sustained the honours of God's house. In them Christ is found the hope of glory. Hence to the house of God the church must look for its recruit, and the world for its savour and its light. And when the public worship of God ceases, we hear of no revivals, or if we hear of them, we frequently hear that their fruits have perished in some wild and wayward fanaticism. Hence the church must dwindle and become extinct without the sustaining influence of the sanctuary. There are at length neither creed, nor covenant, nor communion, nor aught else remaining, but some indistinct recollection that once God had there a people, or perhaps some hoary-headed believers, that once ate the consecrated bread.

And what is there worth saving, what that God will watch over or care for, where he has no people; as in the old world when the ark was ready, and in Sodom when Lot was gone? The eye of a vigilant Providence sees nothing to occupy it where there is none of his image, nothing but chaff and stubble—"Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world." Humiliating as the thought may be, none may alter or soften it. "Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." If men are mortified that such is their character as to sink them below the smile of Heaven, and render them and theirs not worthy to be guarded, they must adjust the concern with God. If they will not build him a house, or if they abandon the place where his honour dwells, they cannot complain if he care not to build them a sure

house forever; it is only walking frowardly toward them as they have walked frowardly towards him. He will think it right to make every other interest bend to that of his church, the world willing or not willing, pleased or displeased. "The Lord send thee help from the sanctuary." It would be curious to mark the process by which a people lose the blessings of the gospel and bring upon themselves and upon posterity the plagues that have been enumerated. There is usually discovered

1. A satiety of hearing the word of the Lord. This is indicated by an infrequent attendance upon the sanctuary, by a tardy approach, by a half-day worship, by a dull and drowsy attitude in the house of the Lord, by a neglect of the week-day occasions of hearing the gospel, and by a score of other signs, which say that they are no longer hungry for the word of the Lord. How different from all this was the spirit of the Psalmist when he sang: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." Precisely the opposite of all this longing, and fainting, and crying out after the courts of the Lord, is the spirit of supineness and death, that is seen coming over a people on whom God in righteous retribution is about to send a famine of the word. As every movement of the sinking patient is slow, and the pulse feeble, and respiration laborious, and to think or speak a burden, till death at length is seen standing hard by his pillow; so that people who are about to make the experiment of living without the gospel, will be seen, perhaps for years, putting on the symptoms of moral dissolution, till at length there remains no longer the power of action, or the sense of danger, or the hope scarcely of resuscitation and life. And we have noticed

2. That the spirit of decay esteems the support of gospel institutions a burden. The cost of the sanctuary, and the ministry, and the thousand varied appendages of evangelical worship and ordinances begin to be considered lost. Then comes the inquiry, What am I the gainer by sustaining the gospel? How am I drained of the means of accommodating my family with conveniences! How many acres of territory might I have purchased with the sums that the gospel has cost me! How poor have I kept myself and my family by the offerings of the temple! Could I have them paid back, *the whole* would be a fortune for my children! Thus men grudge the Lord the sacrifices he demands as the very price of their prosperity; and the children learn how reluctantly their parents support religion, and how gladly they would rid themselves of the galling burden. Hence, as soon as their parents are asleep in death, and the property is in their hands, they are all disciplined for the business of pulling down the institutions of heaven, and making the experiment of bartering away the truth for money. Unhappily, all their respect for a parent's judgment goes to establish them in the belief that the gospel does but oppress and impoverish them. Thus the parent dug the grave of his offspring. He incautiously taught them principles that *undermine* his house and *blast* his memory. He had not counted up the cost, how the absence of gospel institutions would alter and injure the character of his offspring, how it would neutralize the Sabbath, and remove the means of becoming wise, and break the grapple of conscience, and lessen the worth of morals and the estimate of character, and throw down his children from the elevation they occupied, and his whole posterity from the position they might have held, into the bosom of a besotted, and mean,

and miserable community:—how, with the removal of the gospel there would vanish all the blessings it brought; the sweets of domestic intercourse, the bonds of the social compact, the elevation of intellect, all the means of being great and good in this life, and holy and happy in the life to come. Unhappy father, he sprung a mine under his own house that threw his offspring, and his name, and his estate, to the winds of heaven, while a tithe of his income, paid honestly to the Lord, would have insured the whole, down, perhaps, to the funeral day of the world. He saved indeed his money and taught his children to save it, but God took vengeance on his inventions. And there follows of course,

3. A disrespect for the ministry of the reconciliation.

That ministry can be useful no longer than respected. When men begin to speak of the office as a mere sinecure, they are not to be expected to derive any great profit from it; and when they treat the men who occupy it with coarseness, they may calculate that they are ruining their offspring. He that Heaven has commissioned to negotiate with a rebel world, while he may claim nothing on the score of personal importance or elevation, may still demand that men hold the *office*, and himself, because of the office, in due respect. And in the absence of this respect there is lost to the world the whole influence of that highest *means* of its redemption, *a preached gospel;* and what is more, there is laid the train that is to carry moral devastation down through unborn generations. But,

Finally—There is one token of approaching desolation so marked in its character as to deserve a distinct and prominent notice. I refer to the case when the *people of God* feel that *they* are not obliged to make *greater sacrifices* than others to sustain the sanctuary,

and hand down to unborn generations the blessings of the gospel of peace. I consider no one sign so articulate that God is about to remove the candlestick out of its place. God's people *ought* to do more than others, and if the world would come forward and act so liberally as to save them the necessity, it would be a curse to them. A Christian can pray better when he is making great sacrifices for the Lord, and will grow more rapidly in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, God will feed the most plentifully, and smile the most graciously upon the child that serves him the most cheerfully. Christians receive more blessings than others through the gospel. In a minor sense, it blesses *all*, but in a major sense, believers.—All learn truth and receive elevation of character, and enjoy comforts through the influence of the gospel; but the believer through its influence is sanctified, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance with the saints in light. The one has temporal, and the other temporal and spiritual blessings. The temporal blessings are worth a thousand times the cost of them to the unsanctified; hence, by what measure can we calculate their worth to him who hopes to reach heaven through them? It is for them as well as for the world a wise appointment that they shall do more than others. We would not have them exempted if we could.

Now, when the people of God begin to stand aloof from his sanctuary, and to fear they are bearing an undue burden, and are ready to let it fall, unless others will lift as laboriously as they lift, then you may expect a famine of the truth. When the professed people of God, who are called by his name, and tell of being bound to him by an everlasting covenant, who profess to have laid up their treasure in heaven, and to look for "a city

that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,"—when these will shrink from any sacrifice to sustain the gospel of his Son, and suffer an institution that prospers all others to fail through their covetousness, then, who, can it be expected, will stand and prop the sinking honours of God's house? It is feared we could point you to a great many gloomy sections of this ruined world where this very cause has operated, and is now operating to turn the fruitful field into a wilderness, and render some of the holiest territories in christendom cheerless and dreary as the very caverns of death. On this point one need not fear to say too much, the professed Christian, who grudges the drafts made upon his purse by the gospel, and is ever poor when *its* claims are presented, is to be classed with Demas and Judas, and to be held up to the world as its greatest foe, and to the church as its darkest and deepest blot.

How charming is the place
  Where my Redeemer, God,
Unveils the beauties of his face,
  And sheds his love abroad!

Not the fair palaces,
  To which the great resort,
Are once to be compared with this,
  Where Jesus holds his court!

Here on the mercy-seat,
  With radiant glory crown'd,
Our joyful eyes behold him sit,
  And smile on all around.

To him their prayers and cries
  Each humble soul presents:
He listens to their broken sighs,
  And grants them all their wants.

Give me, O Lord, a place
  Within thy blest abode,
Among the children of thy grace,
  The servants of my God.

SERMON III.

MIRROR OF HUMAN NATURE.

Proverbs xxvii. 19.
"As in water, face answereth to face; so the heart of man to man."

THIS text has received various interpretations; but there is among them one, more generally approved by the friends of truth than any other; and which it would seem to me, is its plain and obvious meaning:—As a man looking into the water, (used anciently as a mirror,) sees there an exact transcript of his own countenance, so every heart has by nature precisely the same moral character with every other unsanctified heart. However men may differ, as to the *circumstances* of their being—as to their *age*, *country*, *habits*, and *education*—still every child of Adam, till renewed by divine grace, has, in the view of Omniscience, the same moral aspect.

Many, who still wish to be considered believers in divine revelation, have asserted, that the parts of Scripture, which give unregenerate men a deformed and polluted character, are not applicable to men of the present day. When Paul says of the unregenerate world, and quotes the saying from another inspired author, "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one; their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips;

whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes;"—when he says all this, it is roundly denied, that in civilized lands—lands enlightened and polished—there can be found beings of so barbarous a character. It may possibly suit the Turk, the Arab, and the Tartar; and may be adapted to some few outcasts in more favoured lands; but as a general description of unregenerate men it is rejected with proud disdain.

In this style the Bible has of late been rudely mangled, till many feel themselves quite at liberty to deny the application to themselves of any text that would go to neutralize their creed, or wound their high sense of the dignity of human nature. It is hence considered important to show,

That men, in all countries and ages, and under every variety of customs and manners, have had, and continue still to have, naturally, the same moral character.

This doctrine it will be my object to illustrate. But I shall first notice some of the circumstances which have contributed to make men differ in their conduct, who have by nature the same moral character.

In the first place, *grace* has made a wide difference in men who were by nature alike. This has been the case in most countries, and in all ages, since God first set up his church in the family of Adam.

In the second place, the difference in *the instinctive passions and affections* has made men to differ in their conduct.

In the third place, some have not the *talents* for doing mischief that others have. This one cause may

operate, when there is no other, to produce the greatest difference of conduct, where there is the same temper of heart.

In the fourth place, some have not the *opportunity* to do mischief that others have. There may be the disposition, and the talents for gigantic iniquity, but opportunity may be wanting. Nero and Julian *had the opportunity*, while many a wretch during their reign, possessing perhaps equal talents, obtained no celebrity in the service of their infernal master. There are men base enough to burn a world, who will die after having done but little mischief.

I remark, finally, that one man may achieve less mischief than another, because *more restrained*. One man is held back from iniquity by his conscience. In another, pride prevents him from descending to the deeds of sin which he would love to do. In another, interest is the restraining principle. Hence the most decent among all the ungodly, may have a heart that will compare in its every feature, with that of the thief, the robber, and the assassin; though restrained from their deeds of death.

Having thus noticed some of the circumstances which have made men to differ in their conduct and appearance, who have by nature the same character of heart, I proceed to illustrate the doctrine, *That men, in all ages, and under every variety of customs and manners, have had, and still continue to have, naturally, the same moral character.*

I. We might infer the truth of this doctrine, prior to any argument, from the similarity of origin, aspect, and general habits, that belong to all ages and all nations of men. All men sprang from the same first parents; in

their veins flows the same blood; they have the same general spirit; feed on the same food; and have all naturally the same general habits; and prior to any extraneous applications, have, as we analogically infer, the same temper of heart. For the same reason that we expect to find the lamb and the dove harmless, and the lion and tiger ferocious, through all their generations, and in all countries where they are found; we expect man to be, in the temper of his heart, the same in all ages and in all nations. When we have settled the point that the human family are all of one species, analogy so far decides the truth of our doctrine, as to cast the burden of proof on those who venture to deny it. But there is on this subject more direct and positive testimony. I would then remark,

II. That we can hardly fix our eye on any individual or community of antiquity, but we can find its exact resemblance, in some individual or community with whose character we are familiar. I shall make my selections chiefly from scripture history, and shall notice those whose deportment made it manifest that they were not born of God, or if otherwise, were left to act out their native character. When I look back to the family of Adam, I see in Cain the prototype of many a man born sixty centuries after him. He saw that his brother's offering was more acceptable than his own, became envious, rose from envy to anger, and gave vent to his malice in a deed that rendered him a fugitive and a vagabond. Now who is so ignorant of human nature as not to see in society men of precisely the same description in the present day; men who covet another's distinctions, and from coveting become malicious, and would destroy, if human law did not interfere, the object

of their spleen. Every generation and every country gives birth to just such men, and they are found amid every community from the highest to the lowest order of men. Witness the whole list of duellists, from the prince who settles his quarrel in style, to the poor kidnapped African who hews to pieces his antagonist with his hoe or his scythe. When their envy does not terminate in blood, it rises often to a horrid pitch of desperation.

In the family of Jacob there was seen all that variety of evil disposition witnessed in later families. There was parental partiality, and filial impiety; there was envy, and jealousy, and pride, and revenge, and vanity, and lust, and deceit, and, finally, all the unhallowed passions, that go to poison the harmony of domestic circles in every country.

In the character of Balaam the false prophet, who pretended a high regard to the divine authority, and a sacred respect to the decisions of conscience, while yet he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and would gladly have permission of Heaven to curse the Lord's people, we have the features of many an evil mind in the present day. Like him, when they cannot do wrong conscientiously, they lay conscience aside, and proceed by the meanest measures to gratify their envy of the Lord's people. Can they bribe Heaven, or force the Bible, or plead the example of the Lord's people, to justify them, they prefer to sin conscientiously, but finally their wrath is too malicious to be restrained by the laws of decency, humanity, or honour.

Look if you please at Shimei, who cursed David in the day of his adversity, and tell me if the present age, and all countries are not filled with men of precisely the same spirit. While their neighbour is prosperous, has

wealth, and power, and influence, they are the merest sycophants; but when the scale is turned, and they have nothing either to fear and hope for, they can display the meanest spirit of malevolence. They have souls the most mercenary, and no opinion of their own, till they fall in with some current of public scorn, when, all at once, they seem the most decided of all men. Who has not witnessed, when public sentiment has set in upon some good man, of whom the world was not worthy, what a multitude will then for the first time discover that he is not fit to live. Witness that most noted of all cases;—when our Lord was arrested, the very multitude, whose blind he had made to see, and whose deaf to hear, whose sicknesses he had healed, whose lepers he had cleansed, and whose dead he had raised, could immediately cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him." A few hours previously, his enemies were afraid to arrest him, because his standing was so high in the public estimation. But his character was unaltered. He did not all at once put on that unworthiness that became an excuse for their wrath. He was the same when feeding the multitude, as when hanging on the tree. Tell me, if from the time of David down to this day, society has not been thick set with men of precisely the same spirit with that miscreant who cursed the king of Judah in his flight.

I name Joab, David's chief captain, ambitious, jealous, impudent, profane, revengeful,—and ask if society is not cursed in the present day with just such men. They will retain their place, and their honours at any expense; will violate truth, and betray confidence, and direct their stab at reputation and life; will carry revenge in their bosoms for years, and will finally violate all the laws of righteousness, and cover their souls with indelible guilt to gratify an unbounded ambition.

Let me name one among that sex where it grieves me to find any fault,—the wife of Ahab; and tell me, if every age and kingdom has not had its Jezebels. You remember her as the abetter of falsehood, fraud, oppression, persecution, and crime in every varied form into which unbounded depravity could mould itself. She entailed upon her husband the horrid reputation of having done more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, than all the kings that were before him. Now you have but to divest her of royalty and power, and you will find her likeness in every considerable group of the world's present population. She was noisy and impudent, bold and masculine, controlled her husband, guided his measures, made him avenge her quarrels, instigated him to deeds of oppression, hated all that was holy, abused the Lord's prophet, and honoured Baal, and finally was eaten of dogs, and went to her own place. Now can it be doubted but that you could find in every district of this world's population many a daughter of depravity, after her own likeness, whom you have only to vest with power and clothe with royalty, and yoke to a weak and wicked prince, and you have another Jezebel, prepared to pollute all that is fair, and blight all that is flourishing in the Israel of God?

You may go out of Israel, and survey all nations of all ages, and you will find all that variety of character noticed in Israel, and seen in our day, and our land. You may select the worst man that has lived in any age or kingdom, or the best of all the ungodly, and you will trace his resemblance in every period and in every tribe of the human family. We allow that circumstances may favour or retard the growth, and the unbridled exercise of the passions in one nation, or at one period, more than another; but still a general comparison of

this world's population, at different periods, will lead invariably to the conclusion that, "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man,"—that the revolutions of time have yet brought round no golden age, in which there was not displayed the same temper and disposition, and when there were not born men of the same general character. I proceed to a

III. Argument. There have prevailed in all ages and nations the same crimes, calling for the restraining influence of the same laws.

Men have been in all times and places inclined to wrong their fellow-men of their property. Hence fraud, theft, robbery, and oppression have been blots in the history of every people who have inhabited the globe. It will not be denied that the immediate descendants of Abraham were the most moral and civilized people of their time; yet these crimes prevailed in Israel. One would steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, and this vice must be restrained by the penalty of restoring five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. Another would turn his beast into his neighbour's field and cause it to be eaten up; and must make restitution of the best of his own field. Another would remove his neighbour's landmark; in which case there must light a curse upon his head, to which all the people must say, Amen. There were those who vex and oppress the stranger, those who would exact usury, those who would take in pledge a neighbour's raiment, those who would not pay the tithes that God had enjoined, those who would take a bribe, who would follow the multitude to do evil, who would profane the Sabbath, who would bear false witness, who would covet a neighbour's wife, or ox, or field. And all these crimes prevailed, to a still greater degree, among the nations bordering upon Israel, who had not upon them the re-

straints of God's written law. And who will deny, that these crimes are still common? Have we not the usurer, the slanderer, the thief, the oppressor, the profane, the adulterer, and the Sabbath-breaker? Have we not in use similar laws to those which curbed to decency, and honesty, and integrity, the family of Abraham? What reason have we to assert, that a single statute in the law of Moses went to restrain a crime that has since then become obsolete? Hence what reason to believe, that human nature has become better? What reason to believe, that the descriptions of depravity which applied to Israel, Babylon, Egypt, Syria, and Sidon, or even to Sodom, will not apply with equal propriety to the men of this land, and of all lands and all generations, when circumstances favour the growth and the practice of the same vices? "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." I draw my

IV. Argument from the fact, that the Bible has never become obsolete.

It describes men of other periods, and the description suits the present generation. Some parts of the Bible describe men as they acted three and four thousand years ago; other parts, as they conducted eighteen hundred years since; and it informs us how men will act down to the end of time. Now, sinners in the present day, soon as they gain some knowledge of themselves, find a faithful description of their hearts in the same Bible. It proves, wherever there is a spirit of self-application, "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." We have sometimes seen persons greatly astonished, to find, all at once, that they had in their house a neglected book, that could tell them all the secrets of their hearts. And this circumstance has not unfrequently persuaded them that the Bible was written by the finger of God.

But if human nature has gradually become better, as some would pretend to believe; if the awful descriptions of depravity given us in the Bible would suit only the generations or communities, of whom they were originally given, the book would not seem adapted, as it does, to men as they now feel and conduct. When the unregenerate world shall have become as much better, as it has become quite fashionable to believe, the Bible will be no longer adapted to our condition. It will not then be a light to our feet and a lamp to our path. I can believe that the *spirit* of the divine law will be in force in heaven, but that detail of the law, found in the Bible, and adapted to a race of sinful and polluted men, must go into disuse when there shall be born a race free from entire depravity. The Bible was intended to follow men into the labyrinths of vice, and there warn, and admonish, and threaten, and reprove. Hence when men shall not thus run into sin, they will need, and God will inspire them a new Bible. It was intended to block up the way of death, and save men from destroying themselves; but when men shall no longer love to tread the way to perdition, the Bible will not be the book they will need, and God will recall his word, and give the world other instructions, adapted to their altered and better condition. Hence whatever evidence we have that the Bible is still the very book we need, we have equal testimony that men are by nature depraved, as they ever were. For if the civil law of Moses would suit well the present generation, though written more than three thousand years since; and if the Prophecies and the Psalms written five and seven hundred years later, are descriptive of just such men as we are; and if the Gospels and the Epistles, of still later date, seem adapted to the moral character of the present generation; with what face can men assert that

their native heart has changed at all its character? Must not the honest man believe still, that, "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man?"

I close with remarks.

1. We see one source of those corruptions of doctrine with which the world is filled. Men have determined that human nature has grown better, and that men are born now very different beings from the antediluvians, or the Jews, or the Romans, or the whole Gentile world in the time of our Lord. Having settled this point, independently on the divine testimony, they infer that the same Bible will not suit the different ages and nations: that what God would say to the ignorant, barbarous beings that once peopled the world, he would not say to the present enlightened and polished nations of Christendom. Thus one error has conducted to another. They have been led, by the deceitfulness of their hearts, to believe one lie, and then, to be consistent, must believe another. Had they but correct views of their own hearts, they would believe that the same book, which lashed the consciences of sinners two thousand years ago, is still the best book for us that God could inspire, and that it needs no altering. This *is* the opinion of awakened sinners. When God makes men acquainted with themselves, the Bible looks them through, as if an omniscient eye was fixed in the centre of every page; and it needs then no mutilations or amendments. Oh, would those who think they see an inappropriateness in the Bible doctrines, look once into their own hearts, that look would be a sovereign antidote to their heterodoxy; and the Bible would soon be found appropriate and precious. They would patiently read its most doleful pages, and trace, with moistened eye, its portraits of human depravity; discovering every feature of themselves in its most darkened lines. In the cha-

racter of the old world, and of the Sodomites, Paul's description of Gentiles, and in the character of Judas, they would see no touch of the divine pencil too dark for a delineation of their own carnal mind. It would rather seem as if the whole had been intended to portray their own likeness, in the fairest colours that truth could use. Their proud brow would gather sadness, their heart would sicken, and falling down into the dust, they would cover their faces and cry, Unclean! unclean! Wo is unto me!

2. The subject justifies a kind of preaching, as plain and pointed as any thing found in the law of God, or in the communications of Christ and his apostles. Those who have anathematized a discriminating, bold, and plain exhibition of truth, have all gone upon the mistaken presumption, that men, as the ages have revolved, have gradually bleached their moral character. They have no idea, that were the Lord Jesus to visit the earth again, he would denounce us as a sinful and adulterous generation, or address the very worst of men as serpents, and a generation of vipers, hardly escaping the damnation of hell;—he would not *now* say, "that the whole world lieth in wickedness," and that "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God;" —the *ignorant* and *barbarous* Jews needed to be born again; as also some of the less civil among the Romans, and a few of the more unlettered among the Grecians; but the term has no meaning in an enlightened congregation in America.

But all this is false and mischievous. Men have just such hearts as they always had; and need a gospel as plain and pungent as that preached by the Lord Jesus. The old serpent needs to be dislodged *now* from his

usurped throne and dominion, by the same coarse weapons, if you please to call them such, as were used eighteen hundred years ago. We may dream that we are conversant with celestial beings; that our readers are all in a fair way for heaven; but while we are amusing them, they may, one by one, steal away to their deathbed, and from thence to a bed in hell. And what minister of Christ would not rather make them feel unhappy all the way to perdition, than find at last, that, while he has been preaching a smooth and polished gospel, one soul has been lost for ever through his negligence?

Every unregenerate man in this world has, in the view of Heaven, the same moral character with those who vexed the righteous soul of Noah, and Lot, and Elijah, and Malachi, and Jesus Christ, and needs to be addressed in the same plain, and pungent, and discriminating style. Why should totally depraved men wish any other gospel than that prepared for the totally depraved? What other gospel can reach their case, and alarm them, and save them? How cruel, if they do wish it, to amuse them with fair words, and smooth speeches, and thus prevent their hearts from aching, till their destiny is sealed. May the blessed God save his ministers from such deeds of treachery!

No, the world needs just such a gospel as was preached in Jerusalem, and Rome, and Corinth—needs to hear the thunders of the same law that issued from the smoke of Sinai, and to see the vivid flashes that glared upon its summit. Not enough better has the world become to admit the softening down of one accent of those denunciations that fell from the lips of Jesus. And he who thinks otherwise, has only to look around him, and within him, and see how the human heart belches forth its moral corruption, poisoning domestic and social joy,

and contaminating every district of this unfortunate and ruined world. Let him attend our courts of justice, and see how men will perjure themselves; let him read the catalogue of divorces; let him spend an evening in the grog-shop; let him stop a moment at her door, whose "house is the way to hell;"* let him enter one of our criminal prisons; let him penetrate once into the secrets of his own heart, and stay there till the light is let in; and if he shall then wish any other gospel than the one he has, we will unite with him in beseeching the Eternal to take back his terrible communications.

3. The subject furnishes ungodly men the means of knowing their own characters. They have but to read the history of the world, and learn what sort of beings once peopled it, and that history is the mirror in which they can see themselves. We do not say that every two unregenerate men are alike in their exterior; but we assert, on the testimony of God, that every two unregenerate hearts have, in the view of God, the same moral character. Hence the most decent of the ungodly may look at the most abandoned, and learn exactly what themselves would be, were God to remove all restraint. Hence spake our Lord of whited sepulchres, that appeared beautiful indeed without, but within were full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. And he elsewhere assures us, He that has been angry with his brother without a cause, though he may not have spilt the blood of any man, is a murderer; and he who has cast a lascivious look, is an adulterer; and he who has not paid his tithes, has robbed God. Thus Heaven looks at the marrow and the pith of character; and if men would know themselves, they must be willing to be measured by the same rule.

* Prov. vii. 27.

4. We argue from this subject, that men must all pass the same second birth to fit them for the kingdom of God. The whited sepulchre, as well as that which is neglected and decayed, needs to be cleansed *within*, else it remains full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. The best man among all the unregenerated is a great sinner, and must become greatly ashamed, and must hate sin, and must put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, or he must be as surely shut out of heaven as the vilest man that breathes. Men, we know, may do different degrees of mischief; one may draw sin with cords of vanity, and another with a cart-rope; and still both may, with equal assurance, be pronounced on the way to hell. And in that world, it is not denied, that there may be different degrees of torment; but it is denied, that either the better sinner or the worse can escape perdition, unless he be born again. Hence it becomes every man, honourable or mean, to be inquiring, what he must do to be saved. The man who stupidly imagines that any elevation of character raises him above the necessity of repenting, and of taking a believing grasp of the atonement by Jesus Christ, has mistaken his own character, and is blind to his approaching destiny. He may compass himself about with sparks of his own kindling, and walk in the light of his own fire, but shall have this at the hand of God, that he shall lie down in everlasting sorrow. Haste, then, ye very best of the ungodly, and be found at a Saviour's feet, that ye may have life through his name. If the world esteems you a benefactor, and you can see no fault in yourself, still you must be born again, or die in your sins, and where Christ is, can never come.

Finally, We see why there need be but one place of destiny in the coming world for all the unregenerate. The

little shades of difference that now appear in the ungodly, are too insignificant to mark them out for distinct worlds. When God takes off those restraints that now make unholy men differ, they will be so much alike that none will impeach his justice when he assigns them all the same outer darkness, the same gnawing worm, and the same quenchless fire. He that has stolen his neighbour's property, and died a felon, and he who has concealed the article found in the street, or the mistake made in his favour, or has purposely become a bankrupt, to escape the obligations of honesty, will appear too much alike in the judgment to require any material diversity in their final sentence. The same perdition will suit them both, though one drops down to hell from the gallows, and the other is borne there on a downy bead. The duellist and the assassin, the usurer and the pickpocket, the forsworn and the profane, the wine-bibber and the sot, the fashionable adulterer and the inmate of the brothel, must be seen to differ so little when God shall tear away the fictitious drapery from the more honourable sinner, that it will seem no incongruity to place them at last in the same hell. God will consider his law as openly violated, and his authority as egregiously insulted, by the man who sinned in accordance with public sentiment, as by the man who did his deeds of depravity in full and open violation of the civilities and customs of human society. Men make wide distinctions where God will make none. Hence the same condemnatory sentence, the same prompt execution of it, the same place of punishment, the same duration of misery, and the same total despair, will be the destiny of the patrician and the plebeian transgressor. Does the man die out of Christ, this is enough; no matter whether he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, or went to perdition a

beggar or a slave. It will be the same thing to God; and for all the millions who repent not, he will build but one hell. Perhaps the meanness and coarseness of his associates may prove at last, to the more accomplished sinner, an ingredient in his cup of misery that shall more than counterbalance the honours and the pride, which, in this life, gave him his fictitious elevation above the vulgar transgressor. Could I make my puny voice be heard, I would thunder this sentiment through all the ranks of elevated crime, till the highest prince should find his adulterous bed a couch of thorns, till the honourable murderer should feel in his own bosom "the arrows of the Almighty,"* and till the boldest in blasphemy and the meanest in knavery should fear alike the same award, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

* Job vi. 4.

SERMON IV.

THE SON OF GOD MUST BE REVERENCED.

Matt. xxi. 37.
"They will reverence my son."

Our Lord, in the context, represents the ingratitude and the barrenness of the Jewish church, by a parable of a vineyard leased for several successive years to unworthy husbandmen, who would not yield the owner any of its fruits; but treated unmercifully every servant sent to receive them. They "took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. But, last of all, he sent unto them his son; saying, *They will reverence my son.* But they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."

We read, that the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and Judah his pleasant plant. He had given them his written word, and had sent among them his prophets. He had displayed before them his glory, and had, as it were, surrounded them by a munition of rocks. The early and the latter rains had rendered their lands fertile, and the blessing of God had prospered them, in all that they set their hands to do. Thus Israel was emphatically a vineyard. But when God had a right to expect that the vines he had planted and nourished would bring forth grapes, they brought forth wild grapes. The very people he had chosen, killed his prophets, polluted his worship, and hewed down his altars; and finally imbrued their hands in the blood of his Son.

Hence the parable, delivered by him who spoke as never man spake, must have had amazing point and

force. It aroused their anger, and they would at once have laid hands on him, if they had not feared the multitude. God had a right to expect that they would welcome to their sanctuary the promised Redeemer, and would hail his birth as the pledge of their redemption. But in their cruelties to the Son of God, they acted out the native temper of the human heart, and showed themselves to be just such men as lived before and have lived since the period of the Saviour's advent. What is said of Israel may be said of men in all ages:—

It might have been presumed that they would treat kindly the Son of God.

This doctrine may be established by the following considerations:—

I. That men would treat him kindly, might have been justly presumed, *from the divinity and glory of his highest nature.* He had a divine as well as human nature: he was "God manifest in the flesh." Previous to his coming, it had been as distinctly asserted, that he was divine, as that he would be human. That prediction of him, "To us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," had been read by the posterity of Abraham; and foretold him in his divine and in his human character. They had reason to expect a Saviour, who built the worlds, and who governs the worlds he built. Hence the thought of treating him with contempt was impious—like offering direct insult to Jehovah. And he had no sooner appeared, than both his natures became manifest. As man he hungered, while as God he created bread to feed the multitude: as man

he thirsted, but as God he converted the water into wine; as man he could suffer and bleed, and died, while as God he could make the sufferer whole; and even summon the dead from their graves. Thus the accusers, the judges, and the executioners of the Lord Jesus, could have no want of evidence that he was the mighty God. Hence, it might have been presumed, that if he must die, God himself must slay him. He must come to his sepulchre by the immediate hand of Omnipotence. No one would dare to betray him, no soldiery would have hardihood enough to arrest him, no miscreant would sit to judge him, no multitude would insult him, none would dare to crucify him. And we should seem to reason correctly in all this, carrying ourselves back to the period before his coming. And still we should reason contrary to matters of fact.

We should have said, anterior to his offering himself to men as their Mediator and their friend, that they would all accept his proffered friendship. When God himself offers to save, how can man reject him? He who now stretches out his hands to the wretched and the lost of my readers, is the same infinite Redeemer who called Lazarus from the grave, who fed the multitude, who stilled the waves, who burst the bands of death, and proved his divinity by ascending triumphant on high. Angels, and other beings who might know what an offer men would thus have of salvation by Jehovah himself, could not have believed that sinners would treat him as they do;—that from Sabbath to Sabbath they would hear his overtures, and turn their back upon him. They would not have conceived it possible, that men, after all he has done, would question his divinity, and rob him of his glory, and persecute his people.

If God should render himself visible, and stand from Sabbath to Sabbath with pardons in his hand, pressing men to accept forgiveness and live, the obstinacy of sinners would appear just what it is. For one who is divine does thus stand. He appropriates to himself all the glories of the Godhead, has the titles, does the works, possesses the attributes, receives the worship, and claims the honours of the Father. He is adored in heaven, under the appellation of the Lamb, in every anthem. And still he stands knocking unheeded at the door of the sinner's heart, till his head is wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night; till we hardly know which is the most surprising, his condescension, or the sinners obstinacy. "They will reverence my son."

II. It might have been presumed that the Lord Jesus would be kindly treated by men, *from the perfect excellence of his character as a man.* There was nothing in him to provoke the anger of good beings. There was neither pride, nor jealousy, nor selfishness, nor passion, nor any of those evil affections that so often involve men in disgraceful broils. He was meek and lowly of mind. He had a character of perfect loveliness. His lips were charged with blessings, and not with curses: "there was no guile found in his mouth." He loved the souls of men, more than he loved his life. There was nothing in him for men to blame or quarrel with, but every thing that could be desired to draw forth their strongest emotions of gratitude and love.

Who could conceive of a race of beings so vile, that they would quarrel with an angel; yet angels have no such worth, as was found in the Son of God. The prophets had human nature left, and might provoke the

rage of their enemies, and tantalize their persecutors. They might demand the fruit of the vineyard in a manner, not the most condescending and kind, and might contribute, by their own unworthy conduct, to fan the fires that were kindling to consume them. And the apostles were men of like passions with those who mocked them, and stoned them. While they demanded boldly, and promptly, the fruit of the vineyard, they might, perhaps, sometimes make the demand rudely. But "they will reverence my *son*." Nothing that was wrong in prophets and apostles was found in him; and what was wanting in them, was in him. He made every doctrine plain, and every duty clear and obvious. He never pressed the conscience till he had enlightened the understanding, nor used an argument that was not sound and good. His honesty, and integrity, and wisdom, entitled him to the credit and the kindness of all men.

Now, are ungodly men aware, that it is this same kind and good Redeemer, who now offers to conduct them to the abodes of glory, but whose kindness they spurn, and whose love they despise? Could it have been believed by those who knew him and adored him, that men would thus treat him, as do all the impenitent? "They *will* reverence my *son*."

III. It might have been presumed, that men would treat kindly the Lord Jesus, *from the reasonableness of his claims*. He came not to reap where he had not sown, or gather where he had not strewed. He came not to demand allegiance when another had a better right to the sceptre than himself; he came not to a world that had another for its creator, its benefactor, and redeemer. He is emphatically represented as hav-

ing come "*to his own*, but his own received him not." This world belongs to the Lord Jesus from its foundation to its top-stone. To him pertain the wisdom of having planned it, the glory of having built it, the right to govern it, and the authority to judge it. All creatures in him live, and move, and have their being. Hence he has a right to our services, independently on his redeeming right. The breath he gives he may require to utter itself in praise; the arm he nerves he may tax with duty; and the eye he enlightens he may reasonably expect to regard him with perpetual complacency.

And when we take into account the ransom price he paid, his own blood, by which he purchased anew the world that was his before, his claim to us and ours is too manifest to be disputed. "He gave himself a ransom for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." In demanding our hearts, then, he demands what is his by a double right; the right of creation and of purchase. We owe to him all we have, and all we are, and all we hope for. We can adore no other sovereign without treason against him, and serve no other master without robbery. All the angels of God are directed to worship him; and if angels, who are his by feebler ties, must pay him supreme respect, then his right to us, and his property in us, none but devils, surely, can have the audacity to question. Hence, from the justness of his claims, it might have been presumed that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ. The vineyard and all its fruits are his.

IV. It might have been presumed that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ *from the condescend-*

ing kindness of his intentions. He stood in no need of us. He would have had an empire large enough to be the organ of his praise, if we had perished. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." And if men had been passed by, and not redeemed, he would, no doubt, have drawn out to view, in some other way, his mercy and his wisdom, which now display themselves in the economy of redemption. He might have redeemed, for aught we know, the lost angels; or might have displayed redemption among the population of some other forlorn and ruined world, or might have revealed his gracious character to us, as he has his eternity, through the word of inspiration. Christ was not dependent on us, either for the stability of his throne, or the promulgation of his glory, or the felicity of his being. No motive brought him to our world but pure benevolence. He "so loved the world" that he gave himself as its ransom. Its miseries moved his pity, and he stooped to help us. He would not have come, had he not been kind and gracious. True, he showed a special regard to the law; would have it honoured; would not allow one jot or tittle of it to fail; and hence he may be viewed as having come "to establish the law;" but it must be remembered, that the law might have been honoured in its execution upon the guilty: so that, independently on the idea of saving sinners, there was no need of the death of Christ, in order to honour the law. Hence his errand into our world was emphatically an errand of love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The love of Christ was the basis of the covenant of redemption. It led him to lay aside his glory, and cover himself with a veil of flesh, and

become "acquainted with grief."—"Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich." He who built all worlds, condescended to say of himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Thus, "by grace are we saved."

Now, it might have been presumed that the Lord Jesus Christ on an errand so benevolent would have been treated well. His design was too kind to deserve any other than the kindest and most prompt reception. Had he gone to devils instead of men, it would seem impossible but they must have received him kindly, when on such an errand, with such heavenly designs. The very pit, it would seem, must have echoed with his praise. Hence, if men have a better character, as they boast they have, ask them how they receive the message of divine mercy. Does the Lord Jesus possess the throne of your heart? Is he the sovereign object of your fear, your love, your hope, and your worship? If not, then cast from you that exalted opinion of yourself, which raises you a single degree above the tenants of the pit.

V. It might have been presumed, that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ, *from his known ability to save.* Had he come in such weakness as would have rendered the enterprise doubtful on which he had entered, then there might have been a temptation to despise him. Had he failed in making the atonement, or been unable to change the heart, or proved inadequate to the work of leading on his people to victory and glory, after he had enlisted them, then had he brought all the measures of his mercy into con-

tempt, and angels would have refused to do him homage. But he was able to do all. He had but to lay down a life which none could take from him, and the price of our redemption was paid. He had but to speak the word, and the veriest rebel bowed to his mandate. And he has always, with consummate skill, led on the sacramental hosts of his elect to the abodes of paradise. Hence, he is said to have "trodden the wine-press alone;" he is represented as "travelling in the greatness of his strength;" is said to "gird his sword upon his thigh;" and to "ride forth conquering and to conquer."

Now, we needed just such a Redeemer: one who was "mighty to save." We were in a condition too forlorn to be redeemed by any other than an almighty Saviour. Hence, when such a Saviour was offered, how could men do otherwise than kindly receive and joyfully embrace him? How could he fail to gain their confidence and love, and be the chosen Captain of their salvation, their Lord, and their King? "They will reverence my son."

VI. This might have been presumed from his ability to *destroy*, as well as to *save*. The Saviour comes, it is true, with an offer of mercy; but he comes, too, clothed with all the authority of the Godhead. He will one day say, as in the parable, "These, mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me." The offers he makes to sinners they cannot with impunity reject. A blessing offered us by our fellow-men may be received or not, as we please, and, if rejected, there accrues no guilt: not so the offer of mercy by Jesus Christ. He comes to demand our hearts as his throne; and will bless us if we receive him; but we are cursed if we reject him.

And the sinner, it would seem, must *know* that he is strong to destroy. He hurled the rebel angels from heaven, and fastened them in chains under darkness till the judgment of the great day. He drowned a world when it would not have him to reign over it. And all his foes he has sent to a hopeless perdition, as fast as they have evinced themselves incorrigibly wicked. Kind as are now his overtures, and extensive his promises, and prolonged his endurance, still, if you remain impenitent, he must stain his raiment with your blood. His eyes will be as flames of fire; and out of his mouth will go a sharp sword to smite the ungodly; and on his vesture and on his thigh will be seen written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." How tremendous the thought, that the very Lord Jesus, at whose feet so many sinners have found pardon, will rise upon the finally incorrigible in all the greatness of his strength, and "tread them in his anger, and trample them in his fury!" To such a Prince, how fair the presumption, that every knee would bow and every tongue confess.

Finally, it might have been presumed that sinners would treat kindly the Lord Jesus *from their necessities*. He found them "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." He passed by, and saw them as an infant "cast out into the open field," in the day that it was born. We had fallen under the curse of the broken law—had neither righteousness, nor holiness, nor happiness, nor hope. There was nothing for us but misery now, and "a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, that must devour the adversary." Thus, our necessities put us in need of a friend—an almighty friend—one that could pity and help the most miserable. Could it, then, have been pre-

sumed, that, should such a friend offer his aid, beings so lost and miserable could reject him ! !

One could sooner conceive that a beggar would spurn the plenty and the pleasures of a palace, and choose to lodge in the street; or that the blind would choose to grope their way to the grave, when they might have vision; or that a dying man would refuse the touch that might give him life and health.

I close with three remarks:—

1. The sinner's final ruin is *unnecessary*. All the purposes of his personal perdition may now be answered in the Saviour. The law can be honoured, and God honoured, and he escape damnation. All the purity of the precepts, and all the attributes of the Godhead, are displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ, far more amply than in the volume of "smoke that ascendeth up for ever and ever." O yes; the cross, that everlasting monument of a dying Saviour, reveals the Deity far more intelligibly than the "everlasting fire." Hence, the sinner is lost, not because of any necessity for his ruin; not because of any doom that chained him down to death; not because his salvation was impossible; not because heaven could devise no other expedient for securing the divine veracity; not because of any thing we can think of—but that he "chose darkness rather than light"—and "death rather than life." Hence,

2. His ruin will be *self-induced*. By this, I do not mean merely that he is a voluntary agent in breaking the divine law. This sin always implies. I intend more than this. The sinner puts forth his hand, and thrusts from him the charter of forgiveness. He might have had life after he was condemned; after his death-warrant was written and sealed; after the pit had been prepared to receive him. Nay, when hell itself was

begun in his bosom, and the divine anger was consuming him—even then eternal life was possible,—but he "chose death!" Hence,

Finally, his ruin will be *wanton*. He will be viewed for ever as having sported with his soul; as if it had been a pearl, and he had run with it to the mouth of a pit, and cast it in; or as if it had been a combustible world, and he with a torch had set it on fire. He employed himself in scattering fire-brands, arrows, and death, and still professed himself to be in sport. The man who plunges the knife into his own heart, does not more wantonly die, than the sinner is wantonly damned. Oh, how affecting, that hell should be thus peopled by a world of suicides, who dared the vengeance, and tantalized the compassion, and despised the forbearance of the Eternal! It might reasonably have been presumed, "*They will reverence my son.*" But no! insulted Jehovah! they pour indignity upon his name and his cross, despise his messengers, and "perish in their sins," rather than do him homage, and humbly seek redemption through his blood.

SERMON V.

THE TWO CHAMPIONS CONTRASTED.

Isaiah xl. 30, 31.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

THE sentiment is often entertained, that religion is suited only for the weak, the aged, and the infirm; but is quite *useless*, if not *injurious*, to the young, healthful, and prosperous. When we have yielded all the respect we can to men who advance this sentiment, we must still pity their delusion. It can never be said that piety injures the young man. He may cultivate in connection with it all the amiable properties of human nature. May be mild and affable; may be decent and ardent; modest and courageous. These lovely and noble qualities religion does not eradicate, but cherish. Can it cast a shade of deformity over them, to add the love and fear of God, who is supremely amiable? Are men so hostile to their Maker, that respect for him, and obedience to him, must make a wound incurable in one's reputation? Then must it be acknowledged, that this is indeed a fallen world.

Is it feared that religion in the young man will cramp his genius, and stop the march of intellect? It would be strange indeed, if a taste for the noblest of all sciences, the knowledge of God and his truth, should narrow the mind, and limit the flight of genius. Such a result would contradict all experience, and give the lie to the first principles of mental science.

Is it feared that piety will wither and paralyze the native fearlessness of youth, and render tame and cowardly the man whose courage and daring might have astonished the world? Does then the love of God, the very principle that makes alliance with the hosts of heaven, and with God himself, diminish our courage, and make us fly "when no man pursueth?" We should expect it to be far otherwise, and should look for a bravery that no danger could daunt, when there is for our defence a host of angels, and One "higher than the highest." The Psalmist reasoned thus, and said, "The Lord is my strength, of whom shall I be afraid?" And Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

What is it, then, that in the esteem of the ungodly renders religion so uncomely in the young men? Where does it fix deformity? True, it does render him less covetous of this world's goods, and less ambitious of its honours, less daring in its deeds of darkness, less deceitful, and less intriguing. But is he the less a man and deserving of less esteem? In such a suggestion there is an infidelity too bare-faced to be hidden. The amount of it is, that piety implies the fear of God; and this is, to the ungodly, the most offensive of all attributes.

The text will lead us to look at the two characters—the youth who sets out to press his way through life and death by the dint of native courage, and the one who waits on the Lord, and thus gathers strength from heaven to bear him on to victory and glory.

I would here premise, that this is a stormy life. Upon every man, more or less, the tempests will beat. Be his character godly or ungodly, he will have foes, and meet dangers, and suffer hardships, and feel afflictions, and will say, before he gets through, that he is passing a

desert world. Now we must encounter the calamities of life by native prowess, or by the courage of piety: Which will aid us the best? This is the question which I wish may be pondered with solemnity for a few moments.

I shall mention some of the storms of life, that we shall all be sure to meet; and inquire, as I pass on, which has the safest defence—the mere man of the world, or the man of piety.

I. We shall all probably part with beloved friends. The ties that bind them to us are slender, the sport of every wind that blows, and every dew that falls. They are ours only by loan, and must be resigned. We may have warnings of their departure, or may have none. They may be torn from us at the moment of our highest attachment—when our life is bound up in theirs—when it shall seem to us that *we* have nothing to stay for, if *they* must leave us. This calamity will certainly come, alike upon the good man and the unbeliever. Which will sustain it best? They stand together by the death-bed of a mother, a father, a sister, a brother: they have the same instinctive passions; they both feel the stroke, and must try to outlive it. But by what principles shall they brace their minds against the storm?

The unbeliever may hope to forget his sorrow, or find some other friend as good, or draw from something else, the comfort he has enjoyed in his dying friend. But all this is a distant and uncertain relief. He will find it difficult to forget his friend, and he dare not wish to, and months, or even years, must elapse before he can hope to. Nor will he find it easy to supply the place of his friend. Such friends do not rain down from heaven, do

not spring up from the ground, cannot be bought. A mother, for instance,—who can supply her place? Who, like her, will wear out her nature to serve you, and watch by your sick-bed, and feel every pang, and wipe away your tears? What friend will become dear to you as your brother, and suffer to befriend you, and endure any thing but death to save you? I know "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;" but he is the friend of the godly, not yours. And you will find it difficult, if you have lost a friend, to secure the same amount of enjoyment elsewhere. Friends are our choicest blessings. Wealth is trash, and fame is air; but a *friend*, in this cold-hearted world, is a precious pearl. See then how distant and doubtful is the consolation of the ungodly.

Take some of the still nearer and dearer friends, and the case is more hopeless still. The mother must see her child taken into the cold embrace of death. And she tries, does she? to live through it without divine support. Now where and when will she find one, who will call her mother, and feel her pains, and watch her tears, and sooth her miseries? Oh, I hear her say, unless she has still another son, "My grey hairs will come down with sorrow to the grave. I shall go weeping to the sepulchre for my son."

Or the dying friend is a wife. Go now, and find, if you can, one who will be a mother to your children. Try if you can forget her endearments. Try if you can find in any other object the amount of joy you had in her. Oh, how the agonies of the ungodly wring pity from our hearts. This is the onset when "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." No native vigour can enable one to brow-beat a storm like this, and not be, in the result, a

hopeless and desponding sufferer. The heart loses its courage, soon as it enters the conflict. No cold philosophy can reason down affection, or mitigate the agonies of separation. And the poor surviver, if an unbeliever, can only "lie down in sorrow."

But not so the Christian, who waits upon the Lord. He has in heaven a better Friend than he has lost, and can smile at the ravages of death, as hurting only some of his minor interests. He can immediately transfer the affection he fixed upon his friend, to God; and reap, in an hour, a return infinitely better than any fruits of earthly friendship. He holds all his living friends as the loan of Heaven, ready to be transferred to their original Proprietor. And in the hour of trial his soul utters with deep sincerity, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He has not to wait till he can forget his friend, or find another, or procure a substitute. He "waits upon the Lord," and is thus strengthened for the hour, and becomes happy in the midst of tears. He passes through the waters, but God is with him; and through the floods, but they do not overflow him. He walks through the fire, but is not burned, neither does the flame kindle upon him. His song is, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted." He never calculated on any very durable good from earthly things, as does the unrenewed man. Hence he is not disappointed. His best hopes are not cut off, nor his richest prospects darkened. God has been as good to him as his promises, and better than his own fears. His trials will soon end in heaven. There he will join a circle of friends to whom he has been long more attached than to any other. Thus he mounts as on

eagles' wings, scales the very heavens, runs and is not weary, walks and is not faint.

At how many funerals have we witnessed this wide contrast between the native prowess of a mind unsanctified, and the fortitude of a man of God strengthened for the trial by the light of *his* countenance.

Come, then, my young friends, let me assure you, how only you can be happy in the hour of bereavement. You may suppress your tears when you attend the funeral of your mother, or your brother, but nature will feel. You may put on the stoic, but the heart will bleed. You may try to cheer your spirits, but your strength will fail, unless God in that hour is your refuge, your very present help. If you intend to live without him, you need hope for nothing but that his waves and his billows will often come over you, while there will be no comforter. You have twenty dear friends, and one may die each year, these twenty years; and ere then you may die yourself. Thus the heart will bleed, and you will be covered with the weeds of death, all the way to the sepulchre. I should not choose to be one of your friends, unless I could believe that you would think of me when I was gone one year; that my funeral solemnities would create a cloud, that would cast its shade upon you till the sun had performed at least one annual revolution. Let each friend make the same demand, and you have no divine support under your bereavements, and you readily see that the whole of life is a cloudy and dark day.

I have noticed yet the loss of friends *by death* only; but we may lose them more tremendously, *by desertion*. Let the hour come when it shall not be popular to be your friend, and when many who have sought your acquaintance, and received your hospitality, and waited

to know and do your pleasure, shall hide their face from you; then is the hour when "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." I know there is a buoyancy in the human heart, that may seem for a moment to sustain you. You can despise the man whose sycophancy deceived you, but who was never your friend, and has now only uncovered to you the rottenness of his heart. You can resolve to despise the men who are the friends of your prosperity, but not of your adversity; and they deserve to be despised: but you will feel a pain dart through you in that hour, which you must sustain, either by your native prowess or by a higher courage. Would you trust in an arm of flesh? Ah, but this arm fails you; and then where will you lean? Now, the good man has no misgivings in such an hour. With him it is a living maxim, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." Paul could keep up all his courage while in the midst of a people who not long before would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him, but were now become his enemies because he told them the truth. And the Lord Jesus Christ, who had all the tenderness of our nature, could, without despair, hear the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" uttered by that same multitude whose blind he had made to see, whose lame to walk, whose lepers he had cleansed, whose sick he had healed, and whose dead he had raised. All this one can easily sustain who has an almighty friend in heaven. He can pour a holy contempt upon the wavering men who have no principle, and will desert him when he needs

their friendship most. He can stand erect because *God* is with him. But how can *you* stand, who have no such friend, but whose whole kindred are in this deceitful world? Here is the spot where it will again happen that "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

II. Amid the changes of this ill-fated world we shall all be liable to suffer the loss of property. No treasure but that which is laid up in heaven is secure; our houses may burn down over our heads; our streams may fail; a foe may rob us of our rights; we may be called to spend all we have upon physicians; we may lose our spirit of enterprise; our reason may desert us. All the good things of this life are ready to take wings and fly away.

Now, can the man who has no treasure in heaven sustain his spirit, as can the man of faith and of prayer? By what consideration can he comfort his soul, when ye shall have taken away his gods? When he is robbed of his best treasures, of *all he has* in the life that now is, while he has nothing in the life to come, how can he fail to sink? Says the sacred penman, "*Their* rock is not as *our* Rock, our enemies themselves being judges." He who has no interest in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, how can he part with his temporal habitation? He who has no treasure which moth and rust cannot corrupt, how can he part with his corruptible riches? He who has no greatness or glory in the kingdom of God, how can he dispense with that which renders him great in the present world? Made

once poor for time, how can he hope for any thing else but eternal bankruptcy? If he should hope *to rise again*, still this is "a hope deferred which maketh the heart sick." If he try to be great in his poverty, still, in a world like this, he will find it difficult, not to say impossible. If he would try to be happy, while yet he is small, here pride erects an insurmountable barrier. He lacks all the means of being happy. The good he values, his only good, is gone. The heaven he built for himself had no foundation, and the storms have swept it away. Poor soul, how completely is he made a bankrupt, and a beggar, and how impossible that he should retrieve his circumstances, till he is altered essentially in his disposition and character!

But things are not thus desperate with the good man, when he finds his estate diminished. We read of those who "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." The friends of God have laid up for themselves "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." They have provided themselves with "garments that wax not old," and have "a house not built with hands, eternal in the heavens." In the midst of losses, they often see that the riches they have parted with stood between them and God, and made them less happy and less holy than they may be without them. They held the heart divided, and kept it cold, and worldly, and selfish, and sordid. Now the clog is removed, and they can mount up as on the wings of eagles. They have now *nothing but heaven* to care for; what they have lost they could have used but a little while, and they can mount higher without it. They still have all that God ever promised; their bread

and their water is made sure. If they can never be rich *here*, still they can hope for durable riches and righteousness in the life to come. If they must toil hard, still their rest will at last be long and sweet. If they must be small and unnoticed, still there awaits them "a crown of glory" in the life to come. Thus, how evident that no native prowess can enable one to conflict with the storms of life like the grace of God.

III. But let us try the prowess of the two champions in another conflict. While one storm shall beat upon friendship, and another upon property, another still may make its assault upon character. This you know is valuable as life. "A good name is better than precious ointment." Being depraved, we are vulnerable at every point. "There is no man that liveth and doeth good and sinneth not." We break the laws of God and of man; we violate the dictates of conscience, and the rules of righteousness; and that man knows nothing of himself, that does not acknowledge all this,—hence we become justly exposed. Men can injure us, and say the truth.

But what is more yet, the utmost uprightness of character does not secure from the attack of slander. If men cannot find enough that is true, they can unblushingly fabricate the rest. And no man, godly or ungodly, is wholly secure. The godly are forewarned, that as men have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, so much rather will they calumniate the household. And now, which, think you, will be the best support through this storm, native prowess, or supernatural grace? You have known the ungodly man to be slandered. Men have accused him of deeds he never did, have wronged him, and abused him. And he set him-

self to oppose the tempest. He cursed his accusers, and returned every blow they dealt, and raved at the foe, and sinned more grossly than he ever had before. He plotted revenge, and pursued it, and perhaps obtained it. But after all was done, was he not rather the vanquished than the conqueror? Did he stand on more elevated ground when he *quit*, than when he *began* the conflict? Ah, he overcame the evil with evil, and sunk the deeper by his attempts to rise.

Let us view the most favourable case. The man abused is ungodly, but has the properties that constitute an amiable man. He meets the assault with all the calmness and all the patience he can command. He reasons, 'If they destroy my reputation, they take my interest too, and then what have I left.' Having no sense of sin, he is not humble, and will not be very patient. He will not exercise a spirit of forgiveness, nor a spirit of meekness, nor see the wisdom of God in the appointment, nor hope for an augmentation of his enjoyments as the final result. Hence he must be unhappy and must be a loser. His courage may in a sense sustain him, but while he stands he will still be wounded, and perhaps destroyed.

Now the man of God in such a conflict has a *heavenly* armour. In the very onset he takes the shield of faith. He is *patient*, because he sees it to be the hand of God. He is *calm* from the conviction, that, dark as the storm may lower, he is safe. If his character should be injured, it only assimilates his condition to that of his divine Lord. He has that sense of sin that renders him *humble*. He exercises a spirit of meekness and of forgiveness, and this renders him *happy*. In the event, as a divine appointment, he sees the wisdom of God, and hopes and believes that in the issue God will be

glorified, and his own best good promoted. "To me," he can say with the apostle, "it is a very light thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." Can he only hope to stand approved in the last great day, all decisions of fallible men to the contrary, have not, with him, the weight of a feather.

Would an angel care, if the whole population of this world should assemble in a mass, and pronounce him a sinner or a fool! He would know that he might still hold the same standing in the sight of God. So the man of faith can soar and act the angel in the hour of onset. He does not, and dares not depend on any native strength of his own, "but waits upon the Lord, and renews his strength."

IV. We are all liable to disease and death. God has not exempted his people, and certainly not his enemies, from this calamity. Disease and death are the wages of sin. And here it often happens literally, that "even the youths are faint and weary." We have seen nature struggling with disease even in the very morning of life. The young man, strong and vigorous to-day, panting for breath to-morrow, and in a few days sinking into an untimely sepulchre.

Now the man who hopes to meet all this by native courage, it would seem must be destitute of the power of reasoning. The very nature of the calamity augurs that he will have neither strength nor courage to bear it. It is the very first effect of disease to render faint and weary—to dishearten and unnerve. The veriest Goliath is a child, when he wrestles with the plague or the pestilence. How then can he stand in the contest?

The mind is enfeebled with the body: hence he cannot reason down his alarms and his apprehensions;

cannot sustain his own sinking spirits. He who a few days since would not have feared to meet single-handed the hardiest foe that might take the field, cannot now raise his head, and is in fear, where no danger is. He may have some consolation from the hope of recovery. But this one hope, tremulous and often forlorn, is the only stay of his soul that remains. If he must die, he is lost for ever.

But here the man of God does not thus sink and perish. He is conscious that he deserves the chastisement; hence has no quarrel with the power that afflicts. He submits and is calm. He has the promise that God will sustain him, will be with him in six troubles, and in seven will not forsake him. "When flesh and heart fail him, God will be the strength of his heart and his portion forever,—all things shall work together for good to them that love God;" and these promises were all made with design to be fulfilled. Hence the good man, when he suffers, can leave himself with God. Every care and every interest he rolls over upon his generous and almighty Supporter. To him "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He can cheerfully wait his "appointed time," and can hope that there is laid up for him "a crown of life that fadeth not."

But what is over and above all this, he enjoys the smiles of God. These lighten his pains and give him joy and peace. Hence sung the weeping poet,

> "The chamber, where the good man meets his fate,
> Is privileged beyond the common walk
> Of virtuous life, quite on the verge of heaven."

On the very dying-bed have we heard the triumphant song, "I mount, I fly." Infidelity may declare all this

visionary; but it is none the less a reality. It is what God has promised, what his people expect, what the diseased and the dying have told us they enjoyed, and is no more incredible than the new birth, at which the ruler of the Jews marvelled.

Now take from the mass of the ungodly, the sturdiest youth you can name, and let him go to his chamber and grapple with disease and death; and place in the adjoining chamber the man of prayer, in precisely the same distressing attitude; and tell me which shall have the palm. The one shall use all his native mind and muscle, shall brace himself against the paroxysms of disease, and cheer up his spirits, and resist the fear of death, and to the full extent of his power, stay his false hope, and wake up his courage. His brave associates shall come round him and ply their sophistry to put down his pains, and put out the eye of conscience, and hide hell from him, and God from him, and his own history from him. And no Bible shall be near him, nor pastor near him, nor prayers be offered. He shall have through the whole conflict all the help that earth and hell can give him. The other shall but make use of prayer and faith, shall stay himself upon his Redeemer, and encourage himself in the Lord his God, and cast the anchor of his hope within the veil. Now tell me which of the two will triumph in the storm. Ah! I see the strong one bow. Ye, that hate the Lord, let me assure you, your champion is foiled in the contest. "Even the youths shall faint."

V. I have thought of several other occasions where the ungodly man and the man of faith will have opportunity to test their prowess in the same conflict, but I will add only one. They must both pass the review of

the last judgment. "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." And to set any value upon a spirit of enterprise or of daring, that will not carry us through that last scene, is to play the fool. I wish to cultivate the principles that will carry me through.

Now follow, if you please, one of the most daring of the unbelievers to the last tribunal. How will he manage there? Can he hide his sins? Can he palliate them, or neutralize them? Can he prove that the law was too severe, or the penalty unjust? Can he offer any eloquent plea why he should be acquitted? Will any angel plead for him? Will the blessed Redeemer be his advocate? Will his courage live and thrive in that conflict? If weighed in the balance, will he not be found wanting? If convicted, will not sentence go forth against him? Will devils be afraid to convey him to the place of torment? Suppose him, if you please, to have weathered every other storm, how will he conflict with "everlasting burnings?" By what daring arguments will he keep hope alive in hell, and resist the embrace of despair, or put out the "unquenchable fires?" Come, ye that intend to brave it through without grace, that dare to live, and expect to die, without an interest in the Lord Jesus, approach the precincts of the pit, and inquire how your champion fares in this last conflict! Does he stand or fall? Does his courage abide by him? May you venture, or not, to join your destiny with his? Let this point be settled before you venture into your dying chamber without the grace of God.

And how does it fare with the *man of faith* in the same conflict? He ventures not to come to the judgment-seat alone, supported by any courage which his depraved heart can generate. He comes clothed with a Saviour's righteousness, owns his guilt, and pleads the

atoning blood of the Redeemer. When bid, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" his reply is "When saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" Then will be heard from the throne of judgment, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." You recollect the amazing result. They who come to that throne in their own name, and hoped to stand by their own native prowess, "*shall go away into everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels.*"

Let me say then, fellow-sinner, while you resolve to trust in man, or in any thing short of an omnipotent Saviour, there remains for you "no hope" but a "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." If it seem to you, however, that your cause will succeed, you have only to make the trial. Storms will beat upon you: but if you still think your own heart can generate all the prowess you shall need in the conflicts of life, and death, and judgment, then you must try. It is my duty, however, to assure you, "that even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall."

But, on the other hand, there is "strong consolation to you who *trust in the Lord.*" The promise is, that "you shall mount up on wings as eagles, shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint." Now God will do all that he has said; will succour you as he has promised, will enlighten your darkness, will provide you a retreat in temptation, will cover your head in the day

of battle, will give his angels charge concerning you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, till you have trodden the whole desert through, and passed over Jordan, and entered the New Jerusalem, to go no more out for ever.

While then, "*the wicked perish at the presence of God*,"—while it becomes *them* to "*weep and howl for their miseries that shall come upon them*,"—"*let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.*

SERMON VI.

THE SOUL RELUCTANTLY MADE FAST TO EARTH.

Psalm cxix. 25.
"My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word."

The Christian is a man of heavenly birth. That world where Christ is he considers his home, and, till he arrives there, he views himself a pilgrim and a stranger. *There* are his best friends, *there* he has deposited his treasures, and *thither* faith often directs his flight, and fixes his delightful gaze. Hence the Christian is never more unhappy than when he becomes attached to the things of the earth. If the dove should lose her wings, with which she used to soar among the branches, and be constrained to crawl with reptiles, and feed on the serpent's food, she would not be more expatriated, than the man of heavenly birth when cleaving to the dust. Such a state, guilty as he may be in every step of his decline, can hardly be said to be his choice. It is a state over which he mourns, and at which he is himself astonished. He is dissatisfied, and, like a dislocated bone, aches to be restored. If he should find himself contented and happy, while alienated from God, it would cut off his last shred of hope. The less he hopes, and the more unhappy, the more hopeful is his case.

The text contains a *confession*, a *prayer*, and a *plea*.

I. It contains a *confession*, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." The Psalmist felt that his mind had become sordid. The things of the earth occupied too much

his attention, and engrossed too exclusively his affections; and the dreadful consequence was that he lost his relish for heavenly things. He was, in his own esteem, a wretched outcast, and calculated to remain a vagabond till God should be pleased to quicken him. If any would know whether this is *their* state, I will endeavour to afford them help. It is a diseased state of a heavenly mind, and the disease, like all others, has its peculiar characteristics.

1. One in such a state will *neglect duty*. It is a burden, because there is no pleasure felt in the performance. Thus, he may justify his neglect, and may half believe that what he thought duty, in the days of his espousals, was a mistake. But, surely, *then* was the time, and not *now*, to decide what is duty. Then the conscience was tender, then was felt a lively gratitude, and a strong sense of obligation. Then the rules of duty, as far as they were known, were regarded. The question then is, what did we think to be duty in the day of our espousals to Christ? Do we act, as we then resolved to act in all the varied relationships of life, and especially in our relationship to Christ? Do we pray as often and as fervently? Do we read the Scriptures as diligently and as prayerfully? Do we walk as circumspectly? Are we as faithful to admonish, as free to speak, for God, as diligent in searching the heart? And is the thought of sin repelled with that promptness and with that holy decision exercised during the first week of our regenerate state? Or do we cleave to the dust? Then we soared on heavenly wings, our conversation was above, our treasures there, our home there, our all there.

If you doubt, whether in the fervency of your first love was the time to fix the laws of duty, I ask when

can we best judge how worthy God is to be loved and served, if not when our hearts have been warmed with his love? When would you be willing that your friend should decide how he should treat you? When his attachment was strong, or when, for some assignable cause, his affections had become alienated? The amount of these remarks is, God has given us general laws, and commissioned conscience to apply them to our particular circumstances. When shall conscience enter upon this duty? If when tender, and before it has been injured by the coldness and wickedness of a relapsed state, how will matters stand with us, as it regards the discharge of duty, on measuring ourselves by this rule?

2. A state of relapse is generally marked by a *heartless performance* of those duties which are not entirely neglected. A wandering mind in prayer, accompanied with deadness, dullness, formality, and a total absence of all that fervour, affection, tenderness, and heavenly aspiration which characterize the duties of the saint awake, are the dire symptoms of this disease of the soul. As an observing believer once remarked, "Christians in such a state pray as if they were not acquainted with God." They do not go to him melted with filial affection. They lie like slaves beneath the throne. Ask them to pray, and they exhibit guilt; and come to the mercy-seat, as the convict approaches the gallows, with the halter about his neck. They will hide in corners that they may not be asked to officiate in the duties of religion, and consider it a calamity to be discovered. They are sometimes distressed at the approach of the communion season. They are too *guilty* to have a *right* there, and too *dull* to have an *errand* there. The very Sabbath aggravates their miseries, by compelling them to attend to duties for which they have

lost the relish. Thus the frost of an untimely winter, chills every duty, and blights every privilege.

3. The state I describe is always attended with a pressure of worldly care. The mind ever presses after some object. To the believer, acting in character, God is that object. His heart is above, his hopes are there, and there centre his warmest affections. But when he descends from that centre, he comes within the attraction of earth, and basely gives the creature those affections he used to fix on God. It is as true that where the heart is there will his treasures be, as that where the treasure is there will the heart be. And our treasure will always need our care, will engross our time, and employ our energies. Hence the Christian whose faith is low, and who lets go his grasp of heaven, as necessarily becomes a worldling, as the man who has never risen above the clod he treads. How long he may remain astray is uncertain, surely not so long but that God will quicken him before he die. But his injured Lord may bring him back with stripes. The more he loves his children, the more certain is it that he will chastise them. Probably not long will he be permitted to be a *worldling*, if God has intended any very eminent station for him in heaven.

4. The wandering believer must be the subject of *small enjoyments*. The new-born man can never love this poor world with *all* his heart. He could have a higher relish for its pleasures if he had never known a better good, if he had never had a glimpse of heaven. The peasant is quite content with his cottage, but make him once a prince, and then reduce him to poverty, and his cottage has lost all its charms. He may through necessity tarry there, but it can never be animated as it

used to be with his smiles, and his songs. So the Christian, however worldly he may become, however sordid and terrine, can never entirely forget that in heaven he has a better home. Having made by faith one excursion into the third heavens, it must be impossible that he should afterward do any thing more than pitch his tent below; he cannot project the idea of a permanent home in a world that loves him so little, or rather hates him so cordially. Hence the impenitent man can find in earthly things a more satisfying good than the strayed believer.

And while he is thus forbidden to be happy in the things of earth, he is also cut off from any sweet intercourse with Heaven. He loses his hope of future blessedness. And the more readily he relinquishes a hope which has no present holiness of life for its support, the better evidence will he give that Christ is formed in him the hope of glory. He in this gives evidence that he understands the nature of holiness: that it must bear fruit. Or he may retain his hope, but it will not be very big with consolations. His spring of comforts is dried up. The Sabbath used to be to him a day of holy, happy rest, but now its hours are dark, and disturbed with the goadings of a guilty conscience. The gospel was once to him a river of life. He guided his steps by its precepts; he hung his hopes on its promises; he fed his soul on its doctrines, and his prospects were illumined by its prophecies. He heard it with joy, considered it the voice of Heaven, and pressed it to his bosom as his richest treasure. Now it has become a sealed book, a dead letter. In the ordinances, he used to banquet with his Lord, forgot his cares, softened his trials, had sweet foretastes of heaven, and staunched every wound with the balm of life. But they are now become mere beg-

garly elements. The closet is covered with the darkness of Egypt; where he *used to be* so happy, where he caught his prospects of heaven, where he often wept away his miseries, and had enjoyments with which the stranger intermeddleth not. His alliance to the saints, once the sweetest bond on earth, has lost almost all its charms. Thus the saint relapsed is cut off from the enjoyments of both worlds. His conversion has spoiled the present world, that it cannot be to him a source of high delight, and his relapse has placed a cloud between him and heaven. A heavenly mind in such a state, is more an object of commiseration than any other on which the sun, in all his course, can look. To cleave to the earth after being born of God, is a fall, like which, there has been nothing similar since the angels made their bed in hell.

The moral disease, which I have thus endeavoured to describe, is *prevalent*, *contagious*, *sinful*, and *ruinous*. It is, in every view we can take, the deadliest plague that ever spent its fury upon a heaven-born soul.

It is *prevalent*, many of our churches throng with professors who are so earthly and sensual as hardly to be distinguished from the mass from which they have been selected. And it sometimes happens in a church, that there are so few that may be considered exceptions, that one would suppose they had acted in concert, and had agreed, unanimously, to become apostates. Were not the evil so prevalent it would be less deplorable. Could we always be sure that there were enough awake to watch the interests of the church, the danger would diminish; they might exert an agency, if any foe approached, to arouse their brethren. The very savages could teach us a lesson. When *they* meet to indulge themselves in the pleasures of inebriation, they are care-

ful to select several of their company, who shall have no share in the brutal pleasure, that they may keep watch over their brethren in their defenceless state. It would be well if a church, when they intend to sleep, would appoint their sentinels, who might alarm them if danger approached, and wake them before the bridegroom came.

This dire disease is *contagious*. If the Christian could sleep, or become stupid or worldly, without infecting his brethren, it would be a smaller evil. But we are so constituted that imitation is one of the most powerful principles of our nature, and is a prime-agent in the formation of character, and we naturally imitate those we love. Hence when a believer falls to sleep, becomes worldly, or neglects the means of grace, those who love him stray with him. And the influence he has, while it qualifies him to do the more good, enables him also to extend sterility and death to the full extent of that influence.

It is not easy to describe the *sinfulness* of thus forsaking God. It is offering him direct and legible insult. It reads to the world this lying lesson: "We have tried the pleasures of religion, and find them poor. Its duties and its cares result in disappointment and misery; and we return to serve mammon." Whether God will endure this insult, judge ye.

It cannot be a light thing to break covenant with a pardoning Redeemer, and trample under our feet the seals and blood of that covenant. To give all his promises the lie, and to barter away our hopes of heaven, for the pleasures of a dream, is a course of conduct which God will not, cannot readily forgive.

But the crime will glare yet more when we read its ruinous consequences. The backslider endangers his

own soul. I know that God's everlasting covenant secures the salvation of every believer, but how shall it be known who is a believer? "We shall know the Lord *if we follow on to know him*." We shall be saved, "*if we endure to the end*." We shall, finally, be fitted for the kingdom, *if we do not put our hand to the plough and look back*. God will work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, *but we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling*. Hence the believer, by remaining in a state of relapse a single day, darkens his evidence of faith, and increases the dreadful probability that his hope is false, and his state alarming. Thus he suspends his own soul over the bottomless pit.

And we have already said that his disease is *contagious*. Thus he exposes his brethren to the same hopeless, comfortless, and fearful state. The injury he does himself may be the smallest part of the evil. He wounds himself, but he may, by his example and his influence, inflict a deeper and a deadlier wound in the hearts of his brethren. Bad conduct will have more influence than good. In doing wrong we fall in with the full tide of human depravity, and press men *downward*, the way they *incline* to go. It is far easier to damn men than to save them. With a very small exertion one may stain his garments with blood, but to save a soul from death is a great work.

And we must not forget that not upon his brethren merely does the backslider exert a baneful influence, but upon all about him! Sinners never feel so justified in their deeds as when they copy the example of a professed believer. Many a time have they shamed us with this remark, "If mine is the path to hell, your Christians will perish with me." And how dreadful to escape to

heaven, and carry with us the recollection that we have sent others to hell! To look about us, as we enter heaven, and see on our skirts the stain of the blood of souls! To descry from the battlements of the upper temple, our neighbours, our brethren, our children in the pit, lost through our example! Then, brethren, we shall want a place to weep. And many a time, it would seem, must the heavenly song be interrupted, by the recollection of the mischief we have achieved.

And who can say that the redeemed soul may not itself be a loser forever by every instance of relapse. It stints his growth. Could you make a plant to grow, if you should remove it from the sun and the rain, and place it in a vault. Leave it there but a single week and then return it to its wonted bed, and who can doubt, but that the injury it has sustained, will be visible on the approach of winter? And why will not the believer, if he arrive at heaven, be forever a smaller vessel of mercy, because of his backslidings? While he cleaves to earth he ceases to grow in knowledge and in grace. The work of sanctification is stationary, and the powers of the soul cease to expand. It is a state of disease, and the spirit pines, till the return of health. There is no relish for the previous provisions of the gospel, the soul's food. Hence it decays; loses its beauty and its strength; is the prey of famine, and thus stints its future growth. One may lose as much in a period of decline, as it can gain in thrice that period. And why will not the evil be visible forever? The degree of blessedness to which we shall be admitted when we die, will bear proportion to the life we live. "Every man shall receive according to his works." He whose pound had gained five pounds was made ruler over five cities; and he whose pound had gained ten over ten. There

will be a difference in heaven we know, as one star differeth from another star in glory. And we cannot see how obedience can be rewarded, unless our future crown shape its glory by our present improvements.

It is believed that glorified spirits will be the subjects of endless increase in joy and blessedness. Hence, if we begin our heavenly growth with different statures, why will not the difference widen, and widen, and widen forever? Each will be perfectly happy; each will find its cup of enjoyment full; but one will be a larger vessel of mercy than another. Hence, why will not the fatal effects of our guilty relapses extend and widen through all the years of heaven? And what pity a heavenly mind should have any thing to impede its growth. How incalculable is the calamity that a spirit, born with the faculty of endless expansion, should be cumbered and compressed with clods of clay! Yet such is the distressing fact; a fact at which the angels might well be grieved, and at which God himself pours out lamentation, "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Depend upon it, brethren, that is a great calamity which can awaken such sympathy and create such regret in the eternal mind.

If any objector should say, "If God so tenderly loves his people, why does he permit them to do themselves such incurable mischief?" The answer is obvious;—God does not intend to make them as happy as he could make them. He could have made them angels instead of men. He could have made them *men*, and yet possessed of nobler capacities, fitting them for sublimer enjoyments. But every question on these subjects is impudent. And for the same reason that God created them as he did, he permits them all to be less happy

than they might be, and makes some happier than others. To measure their future happiness by their present conduct, is to treat them like rational creatures, and if he at last raise them to a glory bright as their capacities can endure, it is all they can ask, or expect, or receive.

Some have supposed that the promise "All things shall work together for good to them that love God," implies that their very backslidings will advance them in holiness. Perhaps this is a mistake. It would be hardly safe to entrust such an imperfect creature with such a promise. It is safe to assure him that all the events of divine providence, shall conspire to render him holy and happy; but let him know that his own sins will have the same effect, and he is bribed to transgress. He is tempted to indulge in sin because he wishes to be holy: but this would be an absurd experiment.

No doubt some have advanced faster towards heaven after a state of relapse. God in dealing with his people may direct that their "backslidings shall reprove them." But whether as a general principle it is true, that to forsake God is the readiest way to make us more like him, demands a doubt. The grace of God may abound toward his recovered children; he may forgive them and love them after they have grievously offended him; and may advance the work of grace in their hearts, though they deserve to perish; but why ascribe to their sins, what is due to the grace of their Redeemer? Peter was a valuable apostle, but perhaps none the more valuable for having denied his Lord. When he was converted he strengthened his brethren, but would perhaps have strengthened them more had he needed converting but once. If the backslider could hope in the midst of his wanderings, that his sins would prove a blessing, that

hope would be illy calculated to bring him back; and if there was such a *promise*, he might grasp at such a *hope*. There is something dreadful in the thought that the believer should embrace an idol and feel himself comforted in his crime, by the prospect of thus increasing his sanctification, and brightening his crown of glory. If the experiment would be dangerous such an application of the promise is false; and the backslidings of the believer himself is not among the all things that shall eventuate in his everlasting good.

II. The prayer—"*quicken thou me*." In a sense, the whole text is a prayer. When David confesses "My soul cleaveth to the dust," he must be viewed as laying open his case to God. He thus dates his prayer, in the very dust of death, as you have sometimes seen a petition dated in the recesses of a dungeon. I think I see in all this deep humility and open ingenuousness. He felt and confessed that his habitation was in the dust, and in that position not attempting concealment, commences his petitions. As if he had said, "Here, Lord, I am embracing the dust." Never was a heavenly mind in a more miserable condition. All ambition to rise is gone. My situation is precisely the object of my choice. "I *cleave* to the dust."

Believer, if you fear that your condition is but too well described in this humiliating confession, and you would hope to be restored again to the favour of God, erect your prayer on a very ingenuous confession of your sins. If you venture upon any petition to your injured Sovereign, date that petition from the place of your guilty retreat. Without any reserve, mention in the ears of your Redeemer, the place of your abode, and

the meanness and guiltiness of your present employment. Suppose the prodigal had dated a line to his father at that moment when he came to himself; how do you imagine it would have read? I apprehend this would have been its purport? "From a far country, poor and friendless, without home or shelter; destitute of a father or counsellor; in the employ of a menial servant, feeding swine; naked and perishing with hunger." How a line thus dated would have melted the heart of his father. And, brethren, if any of you have wandered and are willing to return to God, you must practice the same ingenuousness. You can date your prayer after this manner, "From a world lying in ignorance and wickedness, where I have engaged to shine as a light, while my example increases the aggregate of darkness; an inconsistent professor; a senseless, careless, stupid worldling; buried up in cares that have no concern with thy kingdom; too guilty to hope, too dull to pray, and too depraved to repent." Such a confession deeply felt and cheerfully made may be the prelude to any prayer you may utter. "And before you call God will answer, and while you are yet speaking he will hear."

We see in the prayer of the text a deep sense of dependence. Quicken *thou* me. David felt that none but God could revive him. His case was hopeless, unless there came help from Heaven. He was too far gone to be resuscitated by any other power than that which raises the dead to life. God must be his helper, or he never rises again from the horrible pit. Probably he had made some ineffectual efforts to restore himself, and had by every such effort sunk the deeper from the reach of human aid. The exertions of a sleeping man to wake himself, are of all efforts the most worthless.

Convinced at length that he must die in his dreams or be waked by another, he raises his eye to heaven, "quicken *thou* me."

Christian brethren, if any one of you find your case a similar one, your eye must be fixed on the same divine helper. And yet you must strongly feel, that the more need there is that God should quicken you, the more guilty you are, and the more undeserving of his merciful interpositions. This remark is *predicated* upon the simple fact, that we are agents, that we go into voluntary exile, and remain there because it is our choice. But all this increases the necessity of divine aid. If we are so base that we can choose to depart from the Lord, he must subdue that dreadful choice or our case is hopeless. Let us then feel our need of divine aid, and hang all our hopes upon the timely interposition of his quickening power.

It sometimes happens that the backslider entirely neglects to pray, in which case it is easy to perceive that he cuts himself off from the last resource of help. While the wanderer can summon courage to pray, and can weep over his wanderings, there is hope in his case. However weak one may be in himself, prayer takes hold of everlasting strength. It enlists angels, it enlists God himself on the side of the believer. It wakes in his behalf the watchful eye of Heaven. But I proceed to notice

III. The PLEA used by the Psalmist in his guilty and gloomy circumstances. "Quicken thou me *according to thy word*," i. e., according to thy gracious promises. In making this plea, the Psalmist discovered both his humility and his faith. It was evidence of his humility as it was his *only* plea. He asks no favour because he

was the king of Isreal. He pleads not that he was the man after God's own heart. Nor even does he mention his covenant relation to God, though this would have been a proper plea. God of his mere mercy had made promises to his people; these he believed, and on these he hung his hopes, and grounded his prayer, "Quicken thou me according to thy word."

Brethren, there is no plea in our distresses so prevalent with God, as that in which we plead his promises. He loves to do, and he intends to do as he has said. He issued the promises with a perfect knowledge of our sins, and our unworthiness. He has never repented of one promise that he ever made, nor wishes to be excused from their accomplishment. "He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever," and all the promises are in Christ yea, and in him, amen.

God loves to have his people acquainted with the gracious things he has said. When we have been wandering in the fields of promise, our prayers smell of their perfume. We must have often read the promise, and must have treasured it up in the mind before we can apply it to our case, and make it our plea at the throne. Hence, when we go to God, filling our mouths with his promises, he knows that we are acquainted with his word. And we may in such circumstances come boldly to the throne, assured that we shall "obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need." It is very remarkable that to almost every individual case there is at least one promise, if not more.

Brethren, if any of you feel guilty, you may plead, "Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Or you may pour out your soul in this language, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by

the transgression of the remnant of his heritage." If God hide his face from you, you may make this plea, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." If your trials multiply, if your estate consume, and your friends die, if one trial comes in upon another as wave follows wave in a stormy sea, you may plead this promise, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." "I will be with thee in six troubles, and in seven I will not forsake thee." If no light from heaven seems to shine upon your path, you may plead this promise, "Whosoever believeth in me shall not abide in darkness." If you fear that God has utterly forsaken you, you are not without a promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." If you apprehend that you have wearied his patience, and that having revived you so often, he will never revive you again, you may remind him of this precious text, "My mercy will I keep forevermore," and this, "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face." If you even fear that God may break his promise, there is a plea for you, "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." If it should seem to you that God even delights in afflicting you, as if he meant to break down your spirits by the combined efforts of various calamities, you may plead this promise, "Though the Lord cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of

his mercies." But, brethren, I have entered a field which I did not hope fully to explore. Almost every page of the book of God, and in some instances, every line contains a promise. Could I recollect them *half*, I could occupy your time till that sun had set, and risen and set a score of times. I could tell you of the promises made to them that *fear* God, to them that *hope* in him, to them that *love* him, to them that *obey* him, to them that *trust* him, and to them that *honour* him.

But if the backsliding Christian can only be waked from the slumbers of his relapse he can read the long catalogue of promises, and make them all his own, and found upon each some plea at the throne. Oh! how sweet to come, thus, remembering the kind things that God has said, and resting the soul firmly on the truth of his word, the backslider should hasten to the throne. To stay away is to prolong his miseries; to stay away, is death.

Remarks.—1. The subject gives us a humiliating picture of the human heart. That men should not wish for communion and fellowship with God, who never yet have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, is not surprising; but that the Christian should forsake the Lord, and go after his idols, what a proof of remaining corruption! We have heard of the savage, who, after being civilized, wished to return again to the wilderness, and the chase. We have heard of the prodigal, who, after being restored to his father and his home, returned again to his paths of profligacy. But what have we ever heard of that resembled the consummate folly of him who, having tasted the sweets of Christian enjoyments, could barter away his hopes and his pleasures for the enjoyments of time and sense;

could quit the bosom of his Redeemer, where he was so happy, and try to live again on the husks that the swine eat. Do you think there is one in heaven that could be persuaded to lay aside his harp and come down to our world again if you would give him the whole of it? And Christians have tasted of heaven, and may drink deeper of its joys if they please, and how can they ever barter them away.

2. The subject gives us enlarged views of the mercy of God, that he will make beings so depraved the objects of his affectionate regard. How strange! Look at some lapsed believer, scarcely differing from the world in a thing that can be named; sleeping, it may be, most profoundly, while the outcry of anxious souls is heard all around him; less thoughtful than men who have never tasted nor seen that the Lord was gracious, buried up in worldly care, and engrossed, soul and body, in the affairs of the life that now is! And, tell me, is there any measure to that mercy, which can pardon all this, and raise such a soul to heaven. How unworthy of heaven, and how unfit for heaven, and how ungrateful to the God of heaven; and still the mercy of God can lead him to cast all his iniquities behind his back, and still save the poor miserable backslider. I know that the backslider should entertain no such hope, but should believe himself in the gall of bitterness, and under the bonds of iniquity. But if one such case has been since there was a church, and we should, at last, see that soul in heaven, how it will exalt the compassion of a pardoning God! How his long-suffering patience will shine, as in glowing capitals, among the perfections that will be seen to cluster in his nature.

Finally, my Christian brethren, I have taken up this subject with the apprehension that some of my readers

may be slumbering at this very moment. There is some cause, and where is that cause, and what, that the work of God seems at a stand among that class that seemed the first to wake.* There are many of your acquaintances, probably, in middle life, who know that they are sinners, and feel that sin has ruined them, and would give a moiety of their estate were they safe from the fear of hell; and there they stand, ready to go forward if they must, or backward if they may. Now, is there not some stumbling block not removed out of the way? The preacher would ask his own heart, Is it there? And he would ask every brother, Is it there? Oh, it would be dreadful if any of us should stand in the way of the Lord, and keep souls out of heaven. It would be dreadful not to do that which would bring them to heaven. To find a soul, at last, on the left hand, and know that we had blocked up his way to life. We shall then feel that we had better died when the Lord began to work; our death might have awakened him, and while he has stumbled and fallen, at our example, he might have wept and repented over our grave.

How can a professor calculate that any thing shall ever wake him, if he sleep now? We tell the impenitent, and we have much Scripture and many facts to support the remark, that if he wakes not now, he must probably sleep the sleep of death eternal. And if so, with how much assurance may we say to the slumbering professor, that, probably, he is not asleep but dead, and must be aroused by the same new-creating voice, that must bring to life the dead in trespasses and sins, or he never bestirs him in the ways of God. If he can now see all classes of sinners quitting the ways of death,

* Alluding to a work of God then in progress.

and sitting down clothed and in their right mind at the feet of Jesus, what event more electrifying can he hope to witness, till he see the dead rise and the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven. He would do well to resign his hope, and place himself among the anxious and the inquiring, and begin a Christian life anew. The exhortation of the apostle, "Repent, and do thy first works," is applicable in all its force to the professor of godliness who finds himself inactive and uninterested in a work such as God is doing in this place. It is wicked for him to calculate that he has been born of God, to presume that God will make him happy, or to hope that he has any inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ. Amen.

SERMON VII.

A LIKENESS TAKEN IN THE FIELD.

1 *Corinthians* x. 31.

"Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

THERE is one feature in the mind of God that none have ever been infidel enough to doubt,—his unlimited love of happiness. He delights to pour out blessedness into every heart that he finds prepared to receive it. When, at length, his kindness came in contact with a lost and ruined world, it contrived and developed a plan of redemption. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." He "was rich yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich;" and the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ must be like him. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." Hence, the first inquiry of every new-born soul will be with him of Tarsus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The proper answer to this question will show, *how the Christian is to act out the spirit of his Master in efforts to promote the conversion and the salvation of the world.*

I. Let me begin by saying that the Christian should devote to this work *his personal services.* It is the work we see God doing, and both duty and interest require that we be workers together with God. And the only measure there can possibly be applied to the service is the power we have to serve. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." By this rule God has limited his requisitions. "If there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that which a

man hath, and not according to that which he hath not." The hand is used in Scripture to mean our whole natural ability. It is even used in the same sense in reference to God. "The hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save;" whatever faculty, then, of our nature there is, God has claimed it for himself.

If we can think and reason we are to employ our understanding to save men. We can know their character and their danger, and expose their condition, and, by a thousand motives, urge their speedy escape from the wrath to come, their emancipation from the power of sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. In this very work the infinite mind of God is occupied, nor can we say that he has any employment to which he plies his thoughts with more untiring industry than in the work of redemption. How does he propose to sinners that they let him reason with them, and what arguments that none but God could invent does he urge upon their consideration! "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as snow." How mistaken, then, are the little beings in the shape of men, who suppose they have minds too dignified to be employed in the redemption of souls! They would not, perhaps, grudge to be occupied on the bench or at the bar, but it would degrade them, it seems, to plead the cause of an insulted God with a rebellious world. They would spend life in studying out the laws of nature, or in defining the properties of a plant, a mineral, or an insect, but look down contemptuously upon the business of making men acquainted with God, and winning them back to loyalty and duty! The work of counting money and appraising merchandise is not beneath them,

but it would be quite a stoop to be employed in studying the word of God, and gathering arguments with which to thwart the gainsayings of an infidel and perverse generation! But if the human mind, as infidels have plead, is a scintillation from the infinite mind, how can it have a nobler employment than in winning souls to Him?

It is the legitimate work of every mind to hail the perishing within its reach, and shed upon them an enlightening and sanctifying influence! Not the authorized ministers of the sanctuary alone should feel the pressure of this enterprise, but every intellect that took pattern from its Maker, and wears a trace of his likeness. The power of reasoning was given to us to associate us with God in doing the same work, as far as may be, that he does, and the human mind should feel itself meanly occupied, if, even from necessity, held away from its appropriate work, and compelled for a time to be devoted to the drudgeries of this life. If one has not the knowledge, or the talent, or the leisure, or authority to preach the everlasting gospel, he may not be idle. There is some field open at his door to do good. He can learn, and wield with the hundreds that cross his track, the arguments that sustain the religion of the gospel, can fling out his warnings upon the ear of the gay, and the worldly, and the dissipated, and the drunken, and the profane. He can watch, and wake the slumbering believer, and cheer and sustain the ministry, and stanch the heart of the disconsolate, and plan the measures of benevolence, and put in successful motion a thousand other minds, mightier perhaps than his own, that shall push on the enterprise of redemption, after his own has escaped to heaven, and his bones have been mouldered a thousand years. He may be a small man

in his own esteem, and insignificant, too, in the sight of God, and still may give healthful impulse, and a right direction, to a moving world. "Worm Jacob may take in his hand a new, sharp, threshing instrument, having teeth, by which he shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them." Let the Christian be only willing to be in his place, and there will be presented soon some nook for him to occupy, where he can strengthen and edify the spiritual temple.

And let it not be forgotten that there is no amount of other duty, in which we operate by proxy, that can possibly exonerate us from performing all that may be of this personal service for the Lord Jesus. No matter what the aggregate of duty done through other agencies, we must do this service too. If we could educate a thousand ministers, and buy the services of ten thousand others, and freight the Word of Life to a score of nations, and thus, by proxy, evangelize half a world, if there was still a soul within our reach over whom we could, by the use of our own minds, exert a sanctifying control, we must answer to God for the proper use of that opportunity. Still it would remain incumbent, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Still must we be instant in season and out of season, in warning, and rebuking, and admonishing the wayward and the perishing. The maxim would then apply, "These ought ye to have done, but not to have left the other undone." There is no proviso in the law of God freeing me from being a preacher of the gospel, in the sense now advocated, if I could send out among the lost an army of evangelists numerous enough to begirt the world.

Nor can any Moses plead that he is slow of speech and throw the whole responsibility on Aaron. There is no mind so mean but there is some mind it can reach and instruct, some conscience or heart it can approach and rectify, and, by the Spirit's co-operation, mould into holy and heavenly form. Let men only become willing to be the Lord's servants and he will find them a field of labour. And how can the good man be willing that there should be any heart about him unsanctified or mind unenlightened? Can he rest in indolence when, if he would act, he could enlarge his Lord's empire? Can he see his Master dishonoured, and his law trampled upon when his own exertions would produce obedience? And how then can he have hope that he loves his Master. Piety is a living principle, a power that can generate action and give impulse. The healthful state of the soul depends, I know, on the agency of the Holy Ghost, yet, as God will give his Spirit to them who ask him, his people can always put forth an energy that shall act on others. Hence, if the man of God might with a good conscience withhold his personal services, he would not, but will place himself between the living and the dead, and stay the plague that is paralyzing the energies of a world.

When the church shall feel on this point with sufficient strength every Christian will be virtually a preacher and God will ordain strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. Every profession of godliness will recruit the soldiership of Christ, the stammering tongue will speak plainly, and many will run to and fro, and knowledge will be increased. Men who have purposed to reject Jesus Christ will feel unhappy till they give up the controversy, and, at length, no one shall have need t

say to his brother, Know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least even unto the greatest.

It may be that God calls us to serve him with the *pen*. The man who has talents at this service may not withhold. The pen is that engine by which one mind may bear with energy upon other minds, and, associated with the press, is that lever that can pry up a world. And this weapon, which shook the world in the sixteenth century, will shake it yet more mightily as the millennial morning shall be seen projecting up the sky.

The *world* understand the worth, and the might of the pen, and the church might have learned, if she had not been slow to learn. The lowest scribbler can send his lying puffs abroad in behalf of the theatre, and the politician, who cannot spell his mother tongue, will write and print his electioneering paragraph, then why should not the Christian who can wield an able pen be occupied in this service while the world is perishing. And, if one cannot use this instrument of good himself, he can procure it used. And we may some of us yet live to see half a million of writers employing ten thousand presses in defending the truth, and sustaining the honour of the Lord Jesus.

And if our *minds* seem not to us our noblest part, then may we find something to do for God with our *hands*. We can toil instead of those who have better minds, and let them serve, in our behalf, the interest we love. Here something has been done, but not the thousandth part of what should be. Let the hours that are thrown away by the great mass of the Christian community be employed in labouring for God, and the avails would soon renovate the world. And the labours done with such design would produce habits that would

tell on the health, and plenty, and cheerfulness, and sanctification of the church. By such a practice, when universal, how would crime disappear, and credit rise, and health increase, and life be prolonged, and the labouring community throughout Christendom stand, at length, on an elevation that would cover the whole territory with a halo of glory. Thus the personal services of every man, woman, and child in the church of God may be put in requisition to redeem back an alienated world to its rightful Lord and Master. God of mercy grant that the question may soon cease to be asked, either in or about the vineyard, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

II. I assert, that the Christian must *use his influence* in honouring his Master. I refer now not solely to that direct effort that one man makes to control another, but to that ascendency of moral principle which one acquires, by which he leads other minds on in his own track. It consists in a good name, and implies a good example, and may have relation to family and blood, and place and opportunity. Every man has more or less influence, can exert control over some minds and sway all who will suffer themselves to drop into his wake.

Wicked men have influence, and will seldom fail to use it to further the interests they love, and destroy the souls they are obligated to save. How baneful has been its use in all the pages of human history. The influence of Jeroboam ruined ten of the tribes of Israel, and the house of Ahab, his descendant, bred mischief in his kingdom that never could be cured till the kingdom was extirpated; and the influence of Jezebel laid a train of mischief and guilt that even her own

blood could not wash away. And all who are acquainted with history know how blighting has been the influence of Voltaire, spreading over a whole continent, and reaching down now through a century, destined, we fear, to mark its track with the blood of souls through the space of a thousand years. And the miserable Paine, who had all his baseness of principle, though wanting his greatness of mind, did mischief in his little day, and put moral machinery in motion that has been widening the sphere of devastation till thousands of souls will acknowledge him the father of their damnation.

Now the people of God can put forth the same kind of influence in a *better cause*. They can mould the manners of men, and shape their principles for heaven, and turn the eye of the multitude to truth, and duty, and God, by the use of their influence, the agent by which others have spread through creation darkness and misery. Let them throw their whole hearts into this better interest, and be as prompt and indefatigable for God as were these sons of Belial for their master, and we see not why men may not reach the same gigantic influence in the ways of God, and make their life as conspicuous in the church as were these foes of God in the ranks of death.

There can surely be acquired more greatness of soul, and more fixedness of principle, and more steadfastness of purpose in the cause of God than in the service of the adversary. And there can be used as much industry, and courage, and perseverance in making the world holy, as in degrading it. We can place against the polluted names we have rehearsed a Baxter, a Brainard, a Martyn, a Hale, a Luther, a Wesley, and a Whitefield, and a thousand other names; and what these holy men were others can be, and we might have a whole

generation on the stage at once. As the starry night has its galaxy, so the moral world will have, when the Lord's people shall try to shine in all the glory of their Master. They can easily make their influence be felt as it never has been, and as soon as they shall *try*, their exertions will tell on the character of the church and the world.

On the church an influence may be used with advantage, as there cannot be supposed any prejudice to counteract it. We can lead on the people of God to higher spiritual attainments, to a more devoted benevolence, to greater industry, to more prayer, and bible reading, to a closer covenant keeping, and to equipment and discipline in the whole round of heavenly soldiership. The men of the world exert constantly a deadening and adulterating influence upon the church, which should be industriously counteracted by the servants of Jesus Christ. What does the covenant mean? if Christians are not to be putting forth an influence toward each other that shall tend to their mutual sanctification. And how can the church, as a community, throw out a sanctifying influence upon the wide world till this is done?

It is one of the first duties of the ministry, you know, to edify the body of Christ, and why should not each believer exert upon her, as far as possible, the same control? When we shall make the people of God feel that we love them, and our example shall testify that we are followers of Christ as dear children, we shall take a hold of their hearts, and exert over them an influence that shall be moulding them into holy and useful habits. We can help form their creed, and rouse their courage, and correct their wanderings, and inspirit them to increased energy, and skill, and impetus, till the church shall shine forth like the morning. And while we are

thus blessing the church we shall be able to influence the world also. We sometimes mistake the amount of our influence with worldly men, and think it small, when more exertion would show it to be mighty. Let us bear with a steady and uniform pressure against their vices, and urge upon them the thoughts of death and the judgment, and the perdition that ensues, and we shall find afterward that we *have controlled* them. We may rouse their impatience, however, at the moment when they are coming under the power of our influence. I know the world would lessen, and have always hated the church's influence, while yet they feel it and writhe under it, and have no shield to ward off its point and power. But when they have uttered all their calumnies, and flounced and bled for a time, still, if the church bear down against their deeds of darkness they sin with heaviness. Virtually they ask leave of the church, and wait her consent at every step they take in sin. I know they would not own this subjection to a foreign influence, but this alters nothing. Every man must see that no vice can be current against the church's loud, and steady, and prayerful testimony. They cannot even desert her sanctuary till professors do, nor pollute her ordinances, nor trample on her Sabbath, nor profane her Redeemer. When the church rose upon the theatre, and joined with decency to scowl it out of use, it became from that moment a sinking concern, and the stock can never rise again in the market till she will send up to its obscenities, her proud, and gay and prayerless representation. Oh, can she ever do this? Tell it not in Gath! Publish it not in the streets of Askelon! And the game of whist, and the dance, and every other licentious and ensnaring pastime, will go down when professors disuse them. The Sabbath is coming into more general repute

through the church's use of her influence and example in sustaining it. The cause of temperance moved on briskly till it was discovered that the church held in her fellowship those who would drink the cup of devils, but has stayed in its march till she can have time to entomb her inebriates. Fast as any vice shall cease to have its abettors in the house of God it must go down. And when the church shall use her whole influence she will be able to control the manners of *the world*, and make and rectify the public conscience.

And when all this is done the people of God can do more, can render men *awakened*, and *convicted*, and *regenerate*. Not that they can do all this, or any part of it, without the agency of the Holy Ghost, but God has appointed the means that he will bless, the presentation of his truth by the human voice, in that kindliness of form which is applicable to the human affections. In this work his people can be employed. They know the truth and can watch for the kind moment of presenting it, and pray the God of heaven to bless it and give it power. Thus have they the means of subjecting to the Lord Jesus Christ all the men about them, and are blameworthy if these souls quit the world unsanctified. We shall know at the last, and it would be well if we would know it now, how high a bearing our present deportment has upon the character and destiny of the ungodly. We shall see *then*, that the quiet of conscience, and the self-complacency, and the calmness, and content, that make the face of the unregenerate world so tranquil, is criminally associated with the church's slumbers. Soon as she awakes the world is anxious, and when the people of God shall sleep no more, but make their whole influence be felt, then may we safely predict that the world's slumbers are ended.

The revivals which marked eighteen hundred and thirty-one, as the year of the right hand of the Lord, and will probably distinguish it till the judgment as of all the years that preceded it, the church's holiest, happiest year, are but the glorious result of the church awake to God's interest, and God graciously attentive to hers. The church has tried a little her influence, not to the extent that she will hereafter, and she has seen the heavenly building rise at every push she gave, and every shout she uttered. Now let the church, for once, throw off wholly her long-protracted paralysis and she may urge on her conquests till earth's entire territory shall be redeemed to the Lord Jesus.

But there will be need that every child of God enlist under the banner of the Lord Jesus. As they must all be sanctified they will all need the discipline of labouring for God; and can, then, all aid in the song that sings the conquest ended, and the victory won? And those whom God loves so little that he will permit them in this age of action to plod on in the rearmost rank of the sacramental host, may well doubt whether they shall have any part in the shout of victory.

Sectarianism will die out as the millennial year comes in. There will be union in this enterprise, "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." The watchmen shall see eye to eye; the grand benevolent institutions of the opening and glorious age shall be ably sustained, and men will be furnished, and money, and prayer, and faith, by means of which the Lord Jesus will honour his people and reinstate himself in his own repurchased empire. The bulwarks erected against the rising kingdom will be sapped, and the foe be disheartened, and the barley-cake will demolish the tents of Midian. The church will

have learned how to make her influence felt in the moral pulsation of the world, and the blessed results will continue down to the period of its dissolution. How happy are the men that are to come after us, and how blessed the generation that shall watch the rising sun and bask in the noon rays of the moral world.

In the mean time the people of God must consecrate to the conversion of the world their *money*. Hardly need this have been said. When men shall have devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ their personal services and their influence, they will not withhold their wealth. This gives them the means of reaching the hearts and consciences to which they cannot extend a personal control. We can here operate by proxy, and put in motion a moral machinery, that may multiply our usefulness a thousand fold. There is wealth enough in the church, if the world should withhold its first and last penny, to buy back to its Master the government of the kingdom. Nor can men or angels conceive of any other reason, why it is there, but that the Lord hath need of it. It rusts and cankers the piety that *covets it*, and the piety that *keeps it*. It is in every such case a millstone about the believer's neck, and will hold him from rising heavenward more than stripes, and chains, and dungeons. All experience agrees, that absolute beggary befits better a heavenly mind than riches. The man of wealth then has but one question to ask: how shall I employ my mammon? And here the field is wide. Let him furnish the world a ministry. There must go with the Bible the living preacher. This is God's appointed means. By the foolishness of preaching he will save them that believe. The harvest may be so wide, that one cannot personally explore its limits, and yet by his money he may fill the field with reapers. Here, as in

some of the bloody conflicts, when life went out in a torrent, a single man can enlist and equip an army, and carry on a war long and desperate till he shall shake the pillars of the opposing empire. This is a crisis when one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. The church has the means, and the world must not need a ministry, and the gospel presents the motives that shall draw these means forth. If they remain in the church, they but nurse idolatry, and thus corrupt her integrity, and mar her beauty. But riches associated with benevolence are like apples of gold in pictures of silver. And they are occupied and will be yet more extensively in replenishing the ministry. The millennial year, if her star is risen and her day has dawned, cannot roll up her sun to his zenith, till our rich men have discovered this use for their money. And when their wealth has made a ministry, it must *sustain it*. This is a sordid world. Men will feed their destroyers rather than their benefactors. Any profession can live better than the ministry of the reconciliation. We must furnish and feed a hundred thousand missionaries. And it is a blessing, and not a curse, that the church has this service to do, has this outlet for her wealth. It had begun to stagnate and breed pestilence, like the river of Jordan till a dead sea was furnished to drink up her waters. It is a blessing to the older churches that they have all this to do, it is their honour and their salvation, and the wealthy Christians have only to learn how, and they will do it, or Christians have not the temper of Jesus Christ.

And we have not yet told the half they have to do. They must fill the world with Bibles, reading in every language under heaven the lessons of mercy to the tribes that sit in darkness, and the same wealth must

sustain the tract cause, and rain down the leaves of the tree of life upon the sickly and perishing nations. They must furnish to the ignorant and the poor Sabbath-schools, and Bible-classes, and all the other means of making mind that the renovation of a world require. There is faith and not infidelity in asserting that the millennium cannot come till the church learns better how to use her money, and it will not tarry when this lesson is well learned. Ride on, blessed Lord Jesus, and assess thy church to the full amount of all the promises, and buy thee a kingdom with it, and reign thou over us and our house forever.

And then, beyond all this, the people of God must give him their children, and a title to their whole house. What right have we in our offspring, vying with the right that the Saviour has? He did not give us children, that we might worship and serve them instead of him. He did not commit their souls to us, that we might with them officer the hosts of his enemies and furnish the church her bitterest foes from the house of her friends. He did not send us children that we might absorb ourselves and all that we have in their rearing, and thus place their interest at war with the interests of his kingdom. He did not make them children of prayer that they should mingle with the world, and profane the privileges of his family to the furthering of their own undoing. He had designs of mercy, and we should know it, and set our hearts to gather them into his kingdom early, and have them servants of his Son soon as they become intelligent. And then we can make them know that we have in our hearts and on our knees devoted them to Jesus Christ, that we are rearing them for his honour, that *we* have nothing that we can do with *them*, and *they* nothing that they can

do in the kingdom of God, if they will not devote their hearts to him, and their all to him. We must teach them to *toil* for him, and *calculate* for him, and *live* and *die* for him. Till this is done, as we have not yet been accustomed to see it in Christian families, the Lord Jesus will delay his coming. To see the father of a family praying for the millennium, and the mother labouring to evangelize the world, each eagerly grasping at intelligence of new victories achieved by the Captain of their salvation, here there is promise, but if in their house there is no prospect of a holy succession that can push on the enterprises of benevolence when the parents are glorified, how dark it looks. And these children too are fed and clad with the church's money, and destined perhaps to inherit a large estate and alienate it forever from God. To die the parent of such a family, is more to be deplored than to die childless. If we would faithfully devote our all to the Lord, it would not so happen with us; he would sanctify our seed and build us up a sure house forever.

And not the children merely, but the whole house should be the Lord's. There should be the fear of God in every department of domestic life. That religion that is confined to the parlour and exhausts its last impulse while yet it has exerted no salutary control over the domestics of the family, which seems regardless of the soul that toils on the farm, or drudges in the services of the house, or waits at the door, a religion that leaves three-fourths of a family heathen, will never evangelize the world. If we do not pity the souls at our door, our philanthropy was never born in heaven, and will do nothing to save the heathen who are sitting in the region and shadow of death. Oh, there is something fatally incongruous in such domestic arrange-

ments, and it must be cured in the church, or our example will make heathen at home faster than our charities and prayers will save them abroad.

Here every householder in Christendom has a noble field for labour. Let him carry the Bible into the apartment of his domestics, if any he has in his employ, and pray there, and read them the tidings of Zion's increase till every spirit that serves him, shall wish to serve his Lord. Then let him look up the heathen around him till there is not one within the circle of his influence, and then let him become a missionary, and spread the gospel through the wide world.

SERMON VIII.

THE PERFECTED GOOD MAN.

2 *Tim.* iii. 17.

"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

THE context reads, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." Thus God has given the Christian minister all the instruction he needs to qualify him for the work of the ministry, and has given to every Christian the instruction he needs to qualify him to be a finished man of God. I shall consider the text in this widest application. If the perfection spoken of in the text be considered a perfect freedom from sin, then we are taught that the truths of God's word are adapted to promote this design, the question still remaining unsettled, as it regards this text, whether the Christian will, in any one case, attain to this perfection till death. Other scriptures settle the point, that there is no man that liveth, and doeth good, and sinneth not; and that if any man saith that he hath no sin, he is a liar. But there is a perfection that belongs to believers in the present life, and to which it seems the apostle has reference in the text. Every Christian must have on all the attributes of the child of God. He cannot be wholly wanting as to any one of the Christian graces. As the child born yesterday is pronounced a perfect child, because he possesses every feature of the man, although feeble, and exhibiting, perhaps, a very faint develope-

ment of some of the manly features; so every child of God must have every feature of piety. He may not lack wholly either faith, or hope, or love, or humility, or any other of the Christian graces. One Christian grace may outgrow another, as in the human body we sometimes see a *member* that has taken uncommon magnitude, while yet every other *member* may have place, though not exact proportion. For instance, we have seen much zeal where there was but little knowledge, too little to guide the man the most safely through this wilderness. And we have seen, on the other hand, abundant doctrinal knowledge, where there seemed not sufficient zeal to kindle up devotion. And we have seen professed believers who wanted wholly some grace of the Spirit, making it manifest that God had not stamped his image on their heart. That the Christian must be perfect, insomuch, that he must more or less exhibit every grace of the gospel, I argue,

I. From the fact that *every grace is the result of the operation of the same divine Spirit*, whose work will ever be perfect. We are assured that "the works of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." All this catalogue of graces, then, will be found where the Spirit of God is. He moulds every feature of the Christian man, and will not leave his work unfinished. He generates the temper that displays itself in every grace. The renovated heart in view of God, loves, adores, and rejoices; in view of sin, is sorrowful and penitent; in view of Christ, believes; under injuries, is meek; under afflictions, patient; at the sight of miseries, compassionate; and in view of its own polluted self, is humbled. Thus, the Holy Ghost generates, at the first, in the

heart of the believer, every grace that will be there when he is ripened for glory. One and another of these graces may grow as circumstances may demand their increase, and finally, attain different degrees of strength and vigour. They are sister affections, which the same Spirit will not fail to generate in every heart it renews. Hence their harmony and their oneness is sure.

There may be in men, by nature, the semblance of some of these graces, which the Holy Spirit has not produced, and we shall see in that case that some are wanting. It will be a morbid and monstrous religion. There will be zeal, perhaps, without humility; devotion, without benevolence; there will be apparently a part only of the *new* man, as if there should be born the limbs only of a human body, or the head or the trunk while every limb was wanting. Now we infer from the fact, that it is the Holy Ghost that creates men anew in Christ Jesus, that there will be in the kingdom of God no such monstrous production. It may not always be easy to settle the question, what extent of morbid growth there may be found in the real believer, and where there are seen deficiencies enough to decide the point that the work is not of God. There may be, where there is no grace, a tameness that may look like humility and meekness; and where there *is* grace, there may be a harshness that shall resemble the operations of unsubdued nature. There may be a natural liberality in men who have no pretensions to faith, that shall shame the remaining covetousness of the believer. And still it is true, that where the Spirit of God operates, he turns the soul right in every respect. He leaves not one new-born soul supremely selfish, or proud, or unbelieving, or malevolent, or under the controlling influence of any one unholy affection.

II. That the Christian will exhibit every gospel grace, and be, in this respect, perfect, we argue from the fact that *the moral actions of the renewed man take their character from the heart that has been the subject of a radical renovation.* While the heart was unsanctified every moral action was wholly sinful: "out of the same fountain proceed not sweet waters and bitter." And though after regeneration the heart remains partially depraved, still its sanctified character will operate in all the varied actions of life, and be as sure to produce one Christian grace as another, and be sure to produce them all when the occasion requires. Place the man, whose heart has been renovated, where he must see iniquity, and he will hate it; where he must suffer abuse, and he will be meek; where he must see want, and he will be charitable; where he comes in contact with the interests of others, and he will be honest; where he must bear testimony, and he will be true. You will see ready to operate a holy nature, and the man will be in every aspect a Christian. I do not say that on every point he may not sometimes *disobey*, but that he will more frequently, on every point, *obey*. A good heart will habitually generate holy affections in all the various attitudes in which the different moral objects may present themselves. The new man is formed after the image of God. Christ is said to be in his people the hope of glory. Hence so far as the new nature operates, and it will operate habitually, it will produce actions and affections of the same moral character. You may then look at the good man from any point and you will see him uniformly the man of God.

III. We argue that the Christian will exhibit every grace of the gospel, and will, in this respect, be the per-

fect man of God, from *the harmony of truth* which is the medium of his sanctification. Sanctify them, said our Lord, in that prayer which he offered for his people, "sanctify them through thy truth." As there is in truth an infinitely extended harmony, no one truth clashing with any other, so the character it shall form will have the same consistency and harmony. The change of character produced at regeneration through the medium of truth; that same truth sustains, and renders fixed, when once established like itself, and every feature of that character will harmonize with every other, and with *all* the others.

If truth so bears upon the mind, through the influence of the Holy Ghost, as to render it humble, we are sure, from the nature of truth, that it can never so bear upon the mind as to render it proud. If truth is made to work repentance, neither the same truth nor any other truth will operate as to produce malice and revenge. Truth will not produce opposite or clashing results. It will not lead a man to love God and hate his neighbour. To love his Bible and hate the Sabbath. It will not generate kindness towards one class of men, and unkindness towards another. It will not produce a spirit of *praise* and *prayer*, and yet a spirit of *negligence* and *sloth*. As there is, in truth throughout a perfect oneness, so will there be in the character that truth in the hands of the Holy Ghost is made to produce.

In falsehood there is no harmony, nor in the character it forms. We do not wonder to see every contradiction and absurdity in the character of an ungodly man. He may be prodigal in his expenditures, and yet covetous; may be mean, and yet proud; may be impudent, and yet impatient of contradiction; may be a tyrant in

spirit, and yet a boisterous advocate of liberty. All these, and any other contradiction and absurdity, may be in the man who has subjected himself to the forming and the control of the father of lies. But the believer is rooted and grounded in the truth, and truth is consistent and harmonious, and will make a character harmonious like itself.

IV. We argue from the *nature* of the *Christian graces*, that they must all be where one is. Where one is wanting the man of God is not perfect. Love to God contains in its very nature, hatred to what is opposed to God. Opposed to God is sin, hence love to him embraces hatred to sin, and repentance where sin has been committed. Humility implies a deep sense of unworthiness, and becomes meekness when abuse is offered. If we feel that we are unworthy, and humility feels this, then the unworthy may not promptly and passionately resist evil. If I have those low views of myself, that I feel as if I deserved to be trodden down, that man who treads me down shall not incur my deadly and implacable wrath. If I love to converse with God, and his people are like him I shall love to converse with them; hence love to God and Christian affection are twin exercises, and will both be where one is. If I am benevolent, and I see my fellow-men suffer when my money will relieve them, I shall be liberal; hence benevolence and Christian liberality are associate affections.

Now, the same result will follow if we compare any two of the Christian graces; they are all harmonious in their very nature. They are all the spontaneous affections of the same renovated heart as it contemplates different objects. When moral beauty is discovered, it

is loved; when moral deformity, it is hated; when misery is seen, there is felt compassion and benevolence; when afflictions are endured, there is submission; when insults from man, there is meekness; when earth, with all its sins and miseries, is contemplated, there is pain, and sorrow, and regret; when heaven, in all its holiness and happiness, is thought of, there is approbation and joy. Thus the Christian affections all harmonize. They are branches of the same graft, through which circulate the same juices, and the same life stream; hence one cannot be without the whole: unless we can suppose with regard to some grace, a total remove from the objects that can call it into action.

V. We shall come to the same result if we observe *how* God, in his word, *characterizes his people.* He designates them by one Christian grace, and applies to them his largest promises under this limited appellation. Abraham is spoken of as one that *feared* God, and the largest promise is made to him; on another occasion he is said to have *believed* God, and it, his faith, was accounted to him for righteousness. Said the Psalmist, "O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that *fear* thee." But if the fear of God, and faith in him, did not imply love to him, and all the other Christian graces, then they would have been all named in appropriating the promise.

We read that, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that *fear* him, and delivereth them." —"There is no want to them that *fear* him."—"He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him, he will hear their cry, and will save them." Thus to those who possess one of the Christian graces are made his largest

promises, and this could not be if the possession of this grace did not imply the possession of all the others.

We find the same is said of them that *love* God. "The Lord preserveth those that *love* him. He will show mercy to thousands of them that *love* him, and keep his commandments. All things work together for good to them that *love* him."—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that *love* him." All this could not be, were it not true that those who love him, fear him and trust him, and submit to him. For the lack of one Christian grace cuts off from heaven, and from the presence and everlasting favour of God.

The *righteous*, it is promised, shall be glad in the Lord, and all the *upright* in heart shall glory. "Light is sown for the *righteous*, and gladness for the *upright* in heart." Thus all that could be desired is promised to the *righteous*.

So those who *trust* in the Lord may hope for his largest benefits. "Let those that put their *trust* in thee rejoice, let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them."

So to *faith* the whole is promised. "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

To the *humble* there opens the same field of promise. "God forgetteth not the cry of the *humble*. By humility and the fear of the Lord, are riches, and honour, and life. Whosoever shall *humble* himself as a little child, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of God. Whosoever *humbleth* himself shall be exalted."

We might travel thus through all the Christian graces, and show that God characterizes his people by any one of them, and promises all the comforts of this

life, and the joys of heaven, to the person who possesses any one of them. But this could not be if the possession of one did not imply the possession of all.

By turning to the threatenings we shall see, on the other hand, that the want of any one Christian grace cuts off the soul from the favour of God. "Wo to him that *striveth* with his Maker;" here the want of a spirit of submission is woful. The want of a spirit of *trust* is ruinous: "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." The want of *humility* is ruinous: "The proud he knoweth afar off."—"The Lord shall cut off the tongue that speaketh proud things."—"Every one that is proud is an abomination."—"The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." Thus we might proceed through all the list of threatenings.

Now compare these two views, and they will furnish an argument of great strength. God's richest blessings are promised to the possession of one Christian grace, and his curse denounced against those who lack any one. Now, if it cannot be true that the good man shall live, because he has one attribute of life, and die, because he lacks one, then he that has one has the whole. He cannot enter into life because he fears God, and be lost because he is proud. Hence every Christian has all the Christian graces. They are all connected, all proceed from the same renewed temper, are wrought by the same sanctifying Spirit, are nourished by the same code of truth, and lead, each one, all the others in its train.

VI. The *experience of believers* will prove to them that there is this indissoluble connection between the

Christian graces, they have all known by *happy*, as well as by *unhappy* experience, that if one grace flourish all the other graces flourish with it, and if one withers all wither together.

Let us look first at the brighter side of the picture. The Christian is placed where one of the graces has special opportunity to grow and flourish. He is seen to grow in the love of God. He increases in the knowledge of God, has admiring apprehension of his character, is absorbed in the wondrous views of his greatness and goodness, and is in the process of being imbued with his image from glory to glory. He now increases in the love of his children. His repentance now for sin is more deep and pungent than in times past. He increases now in humility, in the fear of God, in a spirit of prayer, in heavenly-mindedness, and, consequently, in the hope of glory. If afflicted, he is now submissive and patient; if abused by men, he is now meek and forgiving. At *every* point you will see improvement, if you see improvement in one point. Nourish one branch and all the branches thrive, and show signs of increasing health and vigour. There is, probably, no believer who has not been sensible of these truths from his own experience, nor has he ever been sensible of the contrary. He has not known the time when one grace flourished, and the others decayed. He cannot remember when he became more humble, and, at the same time, less prayerful; more attached to God, and less attached to his people; more heavenly-minded, and less patient and submissive.

If there has been any thing that looked like this in the experience of the believer, it cannot be difficult to detect the fallacy. That was not real humility, but its counterfeit, that flourished while the man was becoming

less prayerful. The very views of God and of sin that would humble him, would also lead him to prayer. Nor was that genuine love of God that increased while he grew cold towards his children, where is seen his image, and where beams his likeness. No; the Christian has never been sensible of the decay of one grace in consequence of the increase of another.

But the other view of this subject will not fail to accord with the experience of all the family of God. They all knew when one grace withered, all the graces withered with it. They knew when worldliness increased, and it cast the frost of death over every grace, "they grew cold in prayer, forsook the people of God," were proud and impatient, and vain and covetous. They remember when they indulged some sin, and it immediately disqualified for duty. They were ashamed to go to their closets when they had sinned; they were ashamed to attend ordinances, and perhaps dare not read their Bibles. "They thought on God and were troubled, and their faces were ashamed."

They felt the wound they had given their piety in every part, lost their confidence as the children of God, their hope sunk, and their everlasting prospects were clouded over. Now why need every grace wither because in one point a wound was inflicted; why did there circulate a poisonous fluid through all the branches of the plant of righteousness, when only at a single point there was inserted the sting of death, unless it be that all the parts of the new man are connected, draw their nourishment from the same fountain, and are fed, if I may keep up the appropriate figure, from the same circulating medium. If we did not know that the head and the arm are united, still when we find that on amputating the head the arm grows cold, we are led to believe

that there was such a union, and that one member has died by amputating the other.

So the Christian graces all spring into being by the same impulse, and are nourished and kept in vigour together, or together wither and decay, as every believer's experience can testify. I close at present with a single

Remark.—How much of the wisdom and goodness of God is seen in the renewed man. With propriety is the work of creating the heart anew styled the new creation. It may well be compared to the work of building a world. To see a moral being filled with ungovernable passions, creating in his bosom perpetual war, resembling the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters continually cast up mire and dirt, so formed anew, that the war and the confusion all subside, and every affection harmonizing with every other; how does a work like this display the glory of God! In creating man at the first there was nothing in the clay to oppose the wishes of the potter; but in creating man anew there is a nature produced which is at war with the nature renewed. The whole current of the soul is turned. Probably to no single work that ever God did, have the angels looked with more admiring praise than to this new creation. Here God appears in all his wisdom, and greatness, and goodness. Here are the finishing strokes of his power and his skill. And, doubtless, some of the sweetest songs in heaven will dwell eternally on the grand theme of the new-birth.

SERMON IX.

THE PERFECTED GOOD MAN.—No. II.

2 *Tim.* iii. 17.
"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

I PROPOSED in the preceding sermon as my object to show that the Christian must exhibit all the graces of the gospel; I attempted to prove the doctrine from the fact, that the Christian graces are all the operations of the same divine Spirit; from the fact that all the moral affections of the new man, take their character from the renewed heart; from the *harmony of truth* which is the *grand medium of sanctification;* from their *very nature;* from the *manner* in which God in his word *characterizes his people;* and from the *experience of believers.* I then concluded with one *remark*, How much of the wisdom and goodness of God is seen in the renewed man. I now proceed to remark

2. The subject will help us to solve the question whether any one of the *Christian graces*, will certainly take *existence prior* to any other one. It has been contended by some that *repentance*, and by others that *faith* will be without fail the first Christian grace. But I see not, if the view we have taken be correct, why any other grace as readily as these, may not be first in order of time. No one will precede the rest by any long space of time. That exercise will be first which has the first opportunity to utter itself. Suppose the man born again in some paroxysm of distress; who can

say that he may not put forth submission previously to either repentance or faith? Or suppose him to be operated upon by the Spirit of God, at the moment when he is listening to some lucid description of the divine character, how do we know that he may not love that character previously to his having that view of the divine law, and of his own heart, which can produce repentance? and so of any other exercise of the new heart. If among all the Christian graces there is a perfect harmony, if they all spring up together, and together flourish, or together decay, how needless the dispute, which appears first; how impossible to know, and how unimportant if we did know! It is quite sufficient that we be assured, that they must all appear, must all appear early, must all flourish together, and all reach their consummation in the kingdom of God.

3. The subject affords us an excellent *criterion of character*, by which, would we be honest, it would seem easy to decide whether we love God. If it may not be easy to decide that we have any particular grace, still it would seem not difficult, with a moderate share of wisdom, to decide, that we have, or have not, one in the whole catalogue of graces. And when the point is settled that we have one, it is certain that we have the whole. In the inquiry, then, whether we have faith, if we do not easily succeed, let us inquire whether we fear God, or whether we have a spirit of prayer, or whether we have meekness or humility. If, however, we have to go almost the whole round before we fix on any one Christian grace, the marks of which appear in our character, we shall have great occasion to fear that we have not the faith of the gospel. If we have that faith we shall have added all the graces which constitute the new man. We shall be humble because we are sin-

ners, we shall be meek because conscious that we often offend, we shall be thankful, and benevolent, we shall have, in more or less vigour, all the graces of the Spirit. There will be *all* the *parts* of the new man. Here, then, we have a rule, plain and simple, by which to try our characters. And if we would rigorously judge ourselves we should not be judged.

4. As a thought somewhat distinct from the last, I would suggest that if any one of the Christian graces *is wholly wanting* it is evidence conclusive that that person cannot possess the grace of God. If Christ be formed in us the hope of glory, his image on the heart must be perfect, no limb, no member wanting, and if all be right in the heart, the same will appear in the life.

Fix, then, your eye on the man, who in one point is always wrong, whatever is true on other points, and rest assured that no work of supererogation, as to other subjects, can make up the deficiency and awaken the hope that he is born of God. Can he never forgive? will any offence committed against him, or conceived to be committed, awaken perpetual ill-will? then a voice from heaven could not satisfy us that that man is born of God. Is he never benevolent? Can no occasion move him to be generous without the hope of reward, then is it impossible that he should be a child of God? Does he uniformly dislike the humble conscientious believer? Does he always select his associates and his confidents from the men of the world? Then is it certain that he does not love the brother whom he hath seen, and how can he love God whom he hath not seen? There must be no particular in which the man of God does not obey his Lord, else being unfaithful in the least, he is unfaithful also in much. I do not say

that at times the good man may not trangress any law, but I say, without the fear that the last day will pronounce me a liar, that at times the child of God obeys every law, and that he, who on one point is always wrong, is not born of God. Hereby do we know that we love him if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.

Now to make this matter obvious, suppose a servant was obedient in every thing but one, but in that one would never obey, is he subject or is he not to the authority of his master? Will he not be pronounced a disobedient servant? Now it is just so in the things of God. There cannot be one law, suppose that law the least important if you please in the whole list of precepts, that the child of God never will obey. God has no such son or servant in his house. Judging by this rule, how many who profess godliness must come short of the kingdom of God. How many are there who were never humble for a single moment in all their life! How many were never seen to do a benevolent act! How many never once possessed a spirit of prayer! How many have always stood aloof from the disciples of the Lord Jesus! How many were never for an hour heavenly-minded! How many never knew how to forgive! How many have uniformly quarrelled with some doctrine of the Bible! How many have never for an hour ceased to love the world, and the things of the world, making it manifest that the love of the Father is not in them.

If there is no monstrous Christian, as has been attempted to be proved, but a perfect harmony among the Christian graces, I shall not need to make an apology for asserting that where any *one* of them is never *seen*,

there *none* of them has ever *been*. Christ will receive none to heaven, who have a part only of his image. We are to follow him in the regeneration, else, when he comes in the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels, we shall be shut out of his kingdom. And we are to follow him wholly.

Brethren, I do not believe that I ever urged a truth more important than this. I wish to try my own character by it, and I wish you may all make the same use of it. Are we, at least sometimes, in the exercise of every Christian grace? Is there any point where it can be said, that we *never* obey? If there is, then are we in the gall of bitterness and under the bonds of iniquity, sure as the truth of God will stand.

5. The subject should caution us not to offend in *one point*, lest the evil be felt in *all points*. I mean by this remark simply, that we should be afraid to cease for a moment, when the occasion requires, to exercise every Christian grace, lest all the graces immediately suffer. We are careful not to wound the smallest member of the body, though we could spare it without much damage, because it is materially connected with all the other parts of the body. It may cost one his life to bruise his smallest finger. Now let the simile apply. Would you esteem it a great calamity to be cold in your affections towards God, then be very cautious not to let your love cool towards his people, for no sooner will you feel cold toward them, than you will begin to cool in your affections towards God. Would you not lose a spirit of prayer, then be careful not to become worldly-minded, for when you cease to be heavenly-minded, you will cease to have often an errand to your closet. Do you prize highly your Christian hope, and would not part with it for a world, then be afraid to

let any one grace cease to be exercised, for your hope will languish with it.

You cannot keep the *body* in a healthy state, and suffer one member to mortify, nor the *soul*, if you suffer one grace to languish. It would be a good question every night, Has any part of the new man been injured to-day? And if so, how can the wound be healed? Have I ceased to watch? Have I indulged pride, or envy, or anger? Have I ceased to be prayerful and heavenly-minded? Have I resisted evil, when I should have been meek? Have I rebelled, when I should have submitted? Have I been overcome of evil, when I should have overcome evil with good? Thus should this awful subject awaken our keenest anxieties, lest before we have realized the consequence, we hazard the health of the inner man, and pierce ourselves through with many sorrows.

6. The subject gives us a view of the whole matter of backsliding. We see how it begins, the Christian in an hour of temptation lets down his watch, and ceases to exercise one of the Christian graces. Say he is abused, and instead of being meek returns evil for evil, wrath for wrath; the evening comes and he has no spirit of prayer; the morning comes and he loses sight of heaven, and becomes worldly-minded. He ceases to have a relish for the company and conversation of believers, becomes proud and covetous, and finally loses almost all his relish for divine things. The evil began at a point, but has widened in its course. It seemed a small matter at the first, but is now a wide-spread and tremendous calamity. The man had better suffered any calamity than have permitted his passions to rise. He did not realize, and *could not*, how dire was the plague, whose infection he inhaled. So we have seen

the finger wounded by a thorn, and in a few hours the whole nervous system was in torture, and often death was the result. Ah! how rich is that grace that saves the backslider from final and fearful apostacy!

We have sometimes wondered to see how in every point the backslider is gone away from the path of life, you cannot name the case or the occasion where he acts out his former character. He is worldly and prayerless, does not love the people of God, is proud, and negligent, and passionate, and envious, and selfish—he is all wrong. Now if I have given a correct view of this subject, we are to expect it to be so. The Christian graces are all connected, must flourish or decay together. Hence he cannot go wide astray in one particular, and yet in other respects hold his former standing. One branch of the plant of righteousness was wounded, and the whole withered. And should it ever revive, the reform must begin as the decay did, at a point, and become general. The man must be converted again as at the first, by the same power, and by the same means by which he was then brought out of darkness into marvellous light. So Peter after his fall needed a new conversion, and would then be able to strengthen his brethren. Hence prays the believer, as he begins to recover, "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." "Tell me, oh thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon, for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions."

7. The subject will teach us how to deal with believers in distress. We must lead them to inquire, where and when they began to offend, and of course to suffer. There the remedy must be applied. We

should not undertake to cure the body of pain, to the neglect of some wounded member, where the whole evil began. We should at least attend to the part affected, that we might dry up the source of corruption, and thus lay the foundation for returning health.

So the distressed backslider must discover where he received his first injury. What sin did he commit, what lust did he indulge, what duty did he neglect, when the darkness and distress which he now suffers came upon him? Here he must repent and do his first works. However difficult the duty, or great the self-denial, he must tread back his guilty steps, or may abandon the hope that his soul can be restored to health and vigour.

God does not cast his people into darkness *wantonly*, does not withdraw the divine influences without occasion. If he hides his face it is because he sees some sin to rebuke. There is some point where there is a renewal of the old controversy, and God resolves that we shall walk in darkness, till we are reconciled to him. Would you then do good to the backsliding believer, urge him to inquiry and repentance relative to the first acts of his decline. What was it that first offended God? When did he first refuse to hear your prayers? When did he cloud your hopes? When had you first a cold and comfortless communion? And what sin was it that shut you out from your heavenly Father's presence? Where on the new man was the wound inflicted that has rankled till the disease has become general? On this spot keep the eye fixed, and here let every effort be made to restore health. Else expect not that God will uncover to you the beauties of his face.

8. If it should seem a calamity that the believer should be so extensively exposed, let it not be forgotten

that he is just so extensively qualified to receive good. As he can be injured through the medium of any one Christian grace; so through the medium of any one he may receive quickening and joy. As in a wide and expanded relationship, we are greatly liable to be wounded and pained, so through the same medium we have multiplied advantages for joy and rejoicing.

The broader our sympathies, the broader our sufferings and consolations. So the senses spread all over the human body, and thus expose a broad surface to the infliction of wounds and the endurance of pains, are also the broad inlets of pleasure. So in the new man there is kept up the same analogy of providence. It is not, however, in any of these cases to be viewed as a calamity. If the believer can be wounded at many points, so at many points, can he receive nourishment and joy. Let him cultivate industriously any of the Christian graces, and the whole will thrive. For instance let him aim at maintaining constantly a spirit of prayer, and we have very little doubt that he will find all the Christian graces invigorated. Let him cultivate a spirit of benevolence, and he will give the new man an impulse in every limb and member. Let him fan the flame of Christian love, and it will kindle a fire that will quicken the whole pulsation of spiritual life. So if you water a single root of the tree or plant, that is perishing with drought, you refresh every branch, and extend a benign influence to the smallest fibre. The Christian, then, who is sensible, I do not say of having grossly backsliden, but of not being in that state of spiritual health and growth that is desirable, may commence reform at any point he pleases. If he will begin this evening to nourish any one Christian grace, he will find himself revived throughout. Collect about you

your Christian brethren, realize your relation to them, open your mind freely to them on the great subject of your spiritual brotherhood, on the place and the pleasures of your future rest, and draw more closely the bond of love, repeat the experiment every week, or if possible every day till you feel that you cannot live without them, and cannot be separated from them, that their God is your God, their Saviour your Saviour, their Comforter yours, and their everlasting home the place of your rest. By the time you have accomplished all this, if there is any such relationship as I have endeavoured to establish among the Christian graces, you will find yourselves revived throughout. You will feel a more ardent love to God, you will have a spirit of prayer, you will be humbled for sin, you will exercise an expanded benevolence, and your mind will become heavenly and happy. Or if you please, cultivate a spirit of prayer, go many times a day to your closet, till you find yourself living near the throne, and all the good effects predicted in the other case will immediately follow. Before you call God will answer, and while they are yet speaking he will hear, open your mouth wide and he will fill it; make a large request, and unmeasured blessings will be granted you.

Think not, however, to neglect repentance, this must begin and keep pace with every reform; if you have grown negligent in any Christian duty, it is a great sin, and there must be deep repentance. The order of your restoration invariably must be, "*repent* and do your first works." This is beginning where your decay commenced, and where God will infallibly meet with you and bless you. He has thus promised, and has a thousand and a thousand times fulfilled this promise. Break up the fallow ground, sow not among the thorns.

Finally. We see how we are to set about cultivating true and extensive peace. Men must be at peace with themselves, by having all the Christian graces in exercise, else they can neither be at peace with God or man. Let every man have war within, and peace in society is impossible. With ungodly men there is always a war in their own bosoms, now let the few believers, who are associated with them, be in a state of coldness, or of backsliding, and then hope to bind the whole mass together by the bond of love, and you might as well hope to build another world. You may blame, one, and another, and another, as the breakers of the peace, but peace will not be restored, till each one blames himself, and begins a reformation at home. Men may exercise their wisdom in attempts to make peace without purity. But the wisdom that is from above is *first pure* and *then peaceable.* The promise is, "If ye walk in my statutes, I will give peace in your land." Said one whom God inspired, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

He then that would be a peace-maker in these times of rebuke and blasphemy, must aim to awaken religious feeling, and raise the standard of piety. Bring men together, who have forsaken God, who have neglected prayer, who have become supremely attached to the present world, and attempt to form between them some amiable compact, and you might as well yoke the lightening and the thunder to the summer breeze and bid them go forth in calmness and serenity.

SERMON X.

INIQUITY FINISHED.

James i. 15.
"Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

We dwell in a world where nothing reaches maturity in a moment. Things begin to be, they grow, and they ripen. The acorn becomes a wide-spread oak; the infant a man; and the little rivulet a majestic stream, that widens its bed, and deepens its channel, as it urges its way to the ocean. Hence there is nothing to which we are more accustomed than growth. There is the infancy, the middle age, and the maturity of all created things.

And it would seem that the same is true of things to which we cannot apply the term *created*. Holiness is begun, it progresses, and is perfected. Character has its embryo, its progress, and its completion. And in the text sin is spoken of as capable of being finished, and then its fruit is death. And yet sin, as the term is used in the text, is figurative. Every sin is a perfect whole, as soon as it has a being; a wrong that every enlightened conscience must disapprove, and which God condemns. But sinful habit or character, which no doubt the apostle intends by the term, may have its beginning, its growth, and its harvest. And the natural fruit is death. But character or habit, in order to come to this disastrous result, must attach themselves to moral intelligence.

Hence the text will lead us to speak of *men* who mature a wicked character and thus ensure the death spoken of, which can be no other but the future misery

of the soul. "The wages of sin is death." Life is the result of obedience, death of disobedience. This is the unchangeable decree of God. If men will violate the commands of God and mature a character that he disapproves, he will shut them from his presence; and this is death. He may stop them before their iniquities are ripe, as the rock rolling from the mountain's top, may meet some mighty barrier, that can resist its impulse, which else will plough its path to the glen, or embed itself in the bosom of the stream. The growth of sin at first may be slow, but it ripens fast as it reaches towards the time of harvest. When men have begun to disobey the law of God, and are casting off the terrors of his threatenings, and conscience becomes silenced, a desperate character, unless the grace of God prevent, can soon be matured. Many a lad in our streets has set out in the career of sin, and become a daring young man, but had yet no idea where and how soon his career would terminate. At first, perhaps, his way seemed pleasant. He slid down the smooth declivity, without obstruction and without alarm. Had he dreamed of the ruin that yawned before him, he would have trembled in the outset. But he saw not the end of his course, till he felt the fall that crushed him to powder. Let me illustrate the subject.

I. *The game of chance finds its maturity in the abandoned gambler.* No matter with what materials or in what circumstances the habit commences. The transition from the game less criminal, instituted for mere amusement, to that where oaths are uttered, and fraud practised, and wealth squandered, and character staked, is easy and convenient. The *practice* should be to a thinking mind frightful, were there no danger of

the habit being fixed. The waste of time is an obvious evil. No man of sense will say, that the time spent at the game is *well* spent. Is the mind enlarged? Is the heart improved? Are the habits rectified? Is the man made holier or happier at the game? Do we see the gambler useful to his country, kind to his family, a man of science, industry, and virtue? Is he spoken of as the benefactor of his fellow-men, and his death lamented as a light put out, a blessing withdrawn? Then why assert his time *well* spent? While he neither blesses himself nor others, is he answering the end of his being? Is he living to any of those purposes for which God created him? Then his time is lost. And have we time to lose? An immortal being on his way to the grave, and much to do in preparation for eternity—has he time to lose? Has God assigned us a longer probation than was necessary? And if not, should any of its hours be lost? And if lost, will not some of our work remain undone when the Master comes?

But loss of time is not the whole evil of the game; the mind is dissipated. Who ever made the experiment and did not find himself, both at the time and afterward, less qualified for serious thought and reflection? Suppose there are neither oaths nor curses at the game, does the little, the trifling, and the silly conversation of the hour enlarge or discipline the mind? Do noble sentiments spring up, and does manly and dignified thought originate with the cast of the die, or the shuffle of the card? Does the man rise with a purer intellect, or one less pure, from the gaming-table? Is serious business more welcome, or less so? Are the domestic duties better discharged afterwards, or worse? Is the man

more or less fitted for manly occupations? On all these questions there can be but one opinion.

Nor can it be denied that the mind is enfeebled and contracted, as well as dissipated, by being employed at the game. Be it allowed, and even this may be disputed, that it comports with the levity and thoughtlessness of childhood, still very illy does it quadrate with the sedateness of the father and the husband. The man must feel, who lends a hand to the game, that he lays aside what is venerable in years and gray hairs, and puts on the child. He becomes a "*little being*," and should not be caught thus letting down his dignity.

Let any one approach unseen to the place of the game and take down the jumble of language and read it to the parties, and if they did not feel little before, they would feel little now. I know that men *may have* practised the game for mere amusement and escaped the ruin that impends, but multitudes have been less happy, and have gone this way to irrecoverable ruin.

It is a sin which strangely bewitches the mind, which gathers strength by indulgence, and which, when finished in the confirmed gambler, bringeth forth death.

His character is a compound of the basest selfishness, cool malignity, subtle impiety, fell desperation, and unrestrained appetite. And let it be finished, and the man is ready for fraud, robbery, murder, suicide, treason, or any other species of crime, and then the fruit is death. Else tell me when the confirmed gambler was reformed, and became either a Christian or a decent man. Should you be able to bring forward *one case*, I can place beside it a hundred where the result was tragical. The instance you adduce, does but prove that God is stronger than the strong man armed,

and can tame the heart at any stage of its desperation. But the hope in such a case is a spider's web. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

II. *Indulgence in the cup is matured in the sot.* Few, when they began to look upon the cup, and tasted its inebriating contents, intended to yield themselves victims to the destroyer. They drank *at first* to be sociable, or it may be to promote health, or exonerate themselves from the charge of singularity. Not a world would tempt them to excess, nor many worlds induce them to draw upon themselves the reputation of intemperance, but ere they have thought of their danger, they are caught in the snare. But when once overtaken, still they intend to proceed no farther. They can and they will govern their appetite, and have only their occasional scenes of indulgence.

Meanwhile, conscience has given the alarm, and is hushed and silenced. False sentiments are embraced, tending to lessen the sin, or hide its progress, or neutralize its consequences. By degrees the heart is hardened, the conscience seared, the habit confirmed, temptations multiplied, and the man is seen to yield up himself a confirmed inebriate. This character of him goes out, and he is seen to throw off the restraint of public sentiment, that last hold that society had upon him. His credit is gone, the peace of his home is destroyed,—his family is desolate, his friends withdraw from him, he must shrink from what little shred of reputation remains, from what of respect is still shown him, from any office he fills, from the hopes that have buoyed up his spirits, and from the whole of that enchanting vision that opened before him.

Some infidel doctrine is suggested by the unsanctified

heart to prop his sinking steps. The apprehensions of futurity are gone, and now the last ligature is sundered that bound him to comfort and character, and hope and heaven, and he cares not, at length, if he *is seen* reeling through the streets a confirmed drunkard! Now his health withers, and he sees the grave yawning, and hell moving beneath. Now, did he intend at first that the habit of tippling should become thus matured? Did he calculate on this total abandonment of comfort, of character, of credit, of confidence, of hope, of life, and of heaven? But his sin is finished. He is snared in the work of his own hands, and, it may be, he ends his days as a suicide or a felon. Or, if otherwise, he comes to a loathsome and deserted death-bed, and sees his poor life going out, while there dawns on him no hope of heaven, nor comes to his help any arm that can snatch him from the jaws of death, or hold him back from the worm that shall never die, and the fire that shall never be quenched. His sin is finished; "and sin," as we have said, "when it is finished bringeth forth death.

III. *Covetousness finds its maturity in the swindler, the thief, and the robber.* This in its beginning can scarcely be distinguished from a virtue. It has *on* the face of prudence and economy, and can be so impudent as to claim the Bible as its advocate. "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Thus supported, it claims the countenance of the wise and the good, and seems removed but a single hair's breadth from a virtue.

Still God denounces it as a vice. It is an undue desire of wealth, and becomes, with the slightest temptation, a wish to enjoy what belongs to another. This

vice, in its early stages, may resort to means that are lawful,—industry and a close, but not generally reputed dishonest, manner of dealing. By degrees, however, there is adopted a loose but licensed swindling. The creditor is kept out of his due; the hireling of his wages; and the poor of their supply. The article vended, has its price advanced; and what is purchased, proportionably depressed. Advantage is taken of the necessitous, and the slack in trade. These oppressive measures, as the sin grows, give place to others, which no law of God or man can be compelled to defend. A total mis-statement of facts accompanies every act of commerce, till there is an entire abandonment of that golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so to them." Now, unless the fear of detection hold him back, the man is prepared for any enterprise that can gratify a sordid mind, for theft or robbery. And it may be that unperceived these iniquities are practised. There may be many a thief, and many a robber, who has yet on the face of honesty, and the attire and the reputation of a gentleman. Not one of the whole fraternity ever intended to be discovered. But unless the grace of God prevents, the covetous man will, finally, mature the vice he nourishes, "and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." The whole band of speculators are in imminent danger of maturing this vice.

The Scriptures furnish us with some striking instances of this sin finished. You will readily recur to the case of Achan. He was one of the three thousand sent of Joshua to subdue the city of Ai. The spoil was to be devoted to God. But the covetous Achan saw a rich Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold. What he saw he coveted, and

what he coveted he took, and then must lie to hide the crime. Thus we see an instance where this sin came to maturity; and the result was, that he, and all his house, his flocks, and all that he had, were stoned to death, and burned with fire. Thus "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

The case of Ahab is in point. He coveted Naboth's vineyard. But Naboth would not part with his patrimonial inheritance, and for refusing he must die, and the dogs must feed upon his blood. You remember the history. The result was that the dogs licked Ahab's blood, and that of his family, in the same place where they had feasted upon the blood of Naboth. Here, again, the sin of covetousness was finished, and it brought forth death.

And the case of Judas is written in lines of blood. He must have had once a reputable character, and when admitted to the apostolic office was unimpeachable. But he was covetous, and, being made purse-bearer for the little family, accustomed himself to purloin its contents. This might have been his practice for years, hence his master denominated him a "thief." When opportunity was, at length, given him to betray the Lord Jesus, the temptation was too strong, and he pocketed the price of blood, and ended his career a suicide. Here again, the sin was finished, and brought forth death. And I could tell you of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, and a host of others, who have followed in the same train, and have earned and reaped the same destiny. Every mail's intelligence, and every court of police exhibit another and another victim perishing by the same iniquity.

IV. *Lasciviousness has its maturity in the pollutions and obscenities of the brothel.* I know that de-

cency shrinks from the very terms we must use on this subject, and still the sin *must* be exposed. If the sight can be endured, go *once* to those wretched abodes, where are bound on the altar of impunity, her thousands of ill-fated victims, and ask them their inividual history, and they will tell you how their sin became finished. They will relate to you how they fell in with some vile associate, while yet they had been uncontaminated, who polluted their imaginations, which led, in an evil hour, to impure desire and a lascivious look, and, finally, to the deed that made them the bond-slaves of hell forever. Their case is now considered hopeless. They are abhorred by themselves and by others, have already died a civil death, and must soon go down to the grave, and then suffer eternally the tortures of the worm that shall never die, and of the fire that shall never be quenched. Here is the text literally true, "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

V. *Profanity, too, has its maturity in those unrestrained blasphemies which have sometimes been uttered at the very juncture, when life was going out.* The profane man does not mature this vice in an hour. It may be that he was educated under the roof of piety, where he was taught to fear an oath. And his earliest departures from yea and nay were, at the first, but a single shade removed from purity of language. By slow and painful degrees, however, he learned to utter the curse, then the oath. Here he intended to stop, as he had intended at each preceding stage of his impious career. But he had now broken through parental restraint, and had well nigh conquered the obstinate correctness of his own conscience, and it became easy to

proceed. It becomes his practice to utter his passions in an oath, and he can at length swear when not impassioned, and the practice soon grows into a habit.

It now becomes quite insipid to go in the old dull track, and he invents new oaths, till at length the names of God and all his sacred attributes, ring upon every change possible, and, aided by tone, and emphasis, and gesture, constitute more than half his impious vocabulary. Finally, he breathes pollution as soon as he opens his lips. And when he has for a time made man the butt of his blasphemies, he begins to abuse directly his Maker, and his Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Now his sin is finished, and in some surprising hour, may meet the sudden arrest of death, with a volley of blasphemy, and die with the execration half finished upon his lips. My readers may not have witnessed this case, and would to God they may not, but assuredly the fact has happened, furnishing us a lucid comment upon the text, "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

VI. *So the Sabbath-breaker matures his sin by degrees.* He went early with his parents to the house of God and grew up to manhood under the droppings of the sanctuary. But on some occasion he was tempted to spend a Sabbath in the fields, or in worldly business. Some wicked associate thus induced him, to break in upon his early habits. And it gave him, at the first, pain of conscience. But a second temptation and a third soon prepared him to do, without distress, what was at the first an outrage upon his whole Christian education. Soon he deserted the house of God, and soon neglected the Bible, and soon threw off his whole religious deportment. He can now waste his Sabbaths over a newspaper, or on his bed, or in a place of rendezvous.

And he entices others away with him to his guilty haunts, and is now quite content to have all his Sabbaths pass without acquiring any knowledge of God, of truth, or of duty. But in the mean time his probation glides away, and he will come to his death-bed, and his Sabbaths be over, *all* over, and no preparation made to meet his God. He would then give a world for a Sabbath. His tortured conscience, unless disease or medicine should stupify him, will rehearse in his hearing the history of his mis-spent Sabbaths, and portray before his astonished eyes the iniquity of his heathenism, till his dying chamber will become a scene of horror like the midnight of Egypt. What he knows of truth, will but paint to him in the more gloomy colours, the sin of despising God's Sabbaths, which he might have improved in becoming acquainted with himself and with God. He is haunted with the conviction that no Sabbath awaits him in heaven. His sin is finished, and he must die, ignorant of that gospel through which God fits his people for his kingdom.

VIII. *So the growth of infidelity, may be traced from its low beginnings to the same destructive maturity.* In his youth the man was a speculative believer, and was satisfied that the Bible was the truth of God. But some shrewd associate made sport of the Scriptures, and put into his hands at length the "*Age of Reason.*" But so correct had been his education that at first he dared not read it. It lay by him and he finally cast his eye upon it, and it suited the temper of his heart; he perused it, and it shook his faith. He yet intended not to become a disciple of that wretch whose principles did not sustain himself in his dying hours. But one scandalous volume referred him to another

and one associate who had discarded the Bible, led him to another, till at length he was prepared to yield his better judgment.

He went on to prop the fabric of his unbelief, till consistency of character drove him to abandon the gospel and quit the sanctuary, and discontinue his prayers, as all inconsistent with his system of rationalism. He had now no means of learning his danger, and felt quite secure in his iniquities. He needs no Saviour and spurns with contempt the overtures of mercy. And his sentiments have misled his conscience, till he can sin with a high hand and feel little or no compunction. He bids fair to die an unbeliever, and although he may renounce his scheme in the hour of death, it will probably be too late to apply to his soul the consolations of that gospel which he has deliberately abandoned. True, the prelibations of his future destiny may, on his death-bed, force him, as they have many of the champions of his creed, into a speculative faith in Jesus Christ, yet is there little hope, that the slighted and abused Redeemer will, at that late hour, become his helper, and then he is lost forever. His sin is finished and it bringeth forth death.

VIII. *So we might trace the sin of lying, from the first instance of prevarication on to the fixed habit of dauntless and deliberate perjury.* When men at first depart from the simplicity of truth, they do not intend to confirm the habit, much less to lie under the solemnities of an oath. But one departure from veracity begets the necessity often of another, and another. And one fortunate escape from detection, holds out the promise of future impunity. Thus the man whose lips had been accustomed to truth, becomes habituated, before he sees

his danger, to utter falsehood. And the case will soon happen that he must swear to what he has stated, and God is called in to witness to the truth of a lie. And he perceives that Heaven does not avenge the deed, and ventures on it again, and again, as party, or passion, or interest dictates. He now soon becomes prepared for deliberate perjury, and is, perhaps, detected and suffers the penalty of human law, or, if otherwise, goes on till the law of God takes effect, and he is turned with all liars into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Thus the sin is finished.

Finally. Let me sum the whole up in one case. These *sins sometimes all meet in the same man, and grow to maturity together.* The vices are all twin-sisters, and can flourish in the same soil, and under the same sunshine. The gambler becomes profane and false, and fraudulent, and intemperate, and lewd, breaks the Sabbath, and derides the truth of the Bible. Some of these vices seldom fail to be in the society of all the residue. When did you know a profane man who had any conscientious regard for the truth, or venerated the Bible? Or when an intemperate man, or lewd, who did not engraft these vices into the same stock where all the others grew? Adopt one sin and all the others plead for their own adoption. Will the infidel judge it out of character to be profane? Will the false scruple to baptize his lie with an oath? Will the inebriate be ashamed to be lewd? Will the Sabbath-breaker venerate the Bible? While one of these sins is coming to maturity, the others, like shoots by the side of a bramble, *will* spring up and grow, and when matured may any of them bring death.

The fact is, to mature any vice requires the abandonment of restraint, and when this is lost, any iniquity can vegetate. The man becomes to every good work reprobate. The understanding is distorted, the conscience seared, the heart rendered cold, and hard, and selfish, and the man becomes deaf to remonstrance, and is placed out of the reach of reform. Now, many sins are finished in the same man, and they inevitably bring forth death.

Remarks. I. How may we know when sin has approached nigh to maturity? No question can be to us all more practical or important. We may know by various signs:

1. Maturity in vice *stuns the sensibility of conscience.* When men can sin and not be filled with distress, it argues that they have silenced the monitor in their bosom. When the gambler feels *happy* after the game, and the drunkard *dreads not* the occasion that will tempt him to indulgence, and the profane *fearlessly* utters the oath, and the false can be as *happy*, when he has spoken a lie as the truth, and the fraudulent feeds *cheerfully*, on his ill-gotten wealth, and the Sabbath-breaker has no *twinges of conscience*, as the hours of holy rest pass by unimproved, and the unchaste can *sleep quietly* in the bed of guilt, and the infidel is sensible of no inward testimony to the truth,—in every such case there is reason to fear that conscience is driven from her moorings, and the storm is high, and hard by is the reef of death, where she is to be finally and fatally shipwrecked.

2. Maturity in vice *progressively excludes shame.* When the profane will utter their coarse dialect within the hearing of the moral, and when the intemperate do

not blush to be caught at their cups, and the liar is not put out of countenance by detection, and the Sabbath-breaker is *willing to be seen*, wasting the hours of holy rest, and the fraudulent *can boast* of the advantage they have taken, and the gambler is willing to be caught at the game, and the infidel *sneers* at the gospel, and the licentious are *proud* of their intrigues; then shame is gone, and sin is finished—a great poet has justly said,

"He that blushes is not quite a brute."

And a greater, and a better man has inquired, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall; in the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord." Here is the very case stated. When men have so far progressed in vice that they have ceased to be ashamed, then the threatened judgments of God take effect, and sin, being "finished, bringeth forth death."

II. The subject addresses itself to parents. Our poor dying children are liable to be ensnared by these vices; if we love them, we shall carefully watch them.

1. We shall be careful not to *corrupt them ourselves*. We have known unhappy parents who taught their children to gamble, and be false, and profane, and fraudulent, and to desecrate the Sabbath, and to use the cup, and reject the Bible. All this, perhaps, they did not intend to do, and would have been alarmed, it may be, could they have seen the end from the beginning. And still the restraints they withheld, or the passions and appetites they indulged, or the principles they in-

culcated, or the example they set, or the doctrines they taught, led their children directly in the way of the destroyer, and *their whole character*, when sin is finished, will be chargeable to their unhappy parents.

2. If we love our children we shall be *careful* not to permit *others* to destroy them. Some parents suffer their offspring to be corrupted before their very eyes. Perhaps they receive some outcast into their family, and he becomes the tutor of their children ere they have suspected the danger. They wonder where and when their children learned to be profane, to use the cup, to be familiar with the language of impurity, to break the Sabbath, to deal fraudulently. Ah! they learned of those who were introduced as domestics in the family circle. Unless parents would bring down their own gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, let them be jealous over the moral character of their servants and of every other inmate of their house.

And we must be equally careful who are their associates abroad. It is inhuman to send them to the school of vice. There may be *youth near us* with whom they may not safely mingle. There may be *families* in their *very neighbourhood*, with whom we should be afraid to have them associate. The seeds of vice may be sown, and the shoots not distinctly seen until we are dead, and still they may spring up, and ripen, and bear, by-and-bye, when we are in heaven, the fruits of death.

3. In view of this subject be warned not to let any sin ripen in your hearts. Think not to trifle with iniquity and come off without harm. If you begin a wrong practice, always remember that it may ripen into an obstinate and deadly habit. The rock which you roll from the summit of a mountain may move slow at

the first, and require great effort to start it, but it may acquire momentum before you are aware, and may plough itself a path to the valley through the mightiest barriers that a creating God has interposed in its course. The only safe doctrine is that inspired maxim, "*Touch not, taste not, handle not.*" Say not, I have learned the rules of the game, but intend not to be a gambler. Say not, I sometimes indulge myself in the cup, but I do not intend to be a drunkard. Say not, I know I am sometimes covetous, but do not intend to be a thief or a robber. Say not, I sometimes indulge my lewd affections, but shall never entrust myself in the house of infamy. Say not, I sometimes allow myself in profanity, but can never be tempted to blasphemy. Say not, I have sometimes profaned the Sabbath, but I shall proceed no farther, shall never quit the sanctuary, or cease to regard that day as holy. Say not, I sometimes ply the unbeliever's objections to the Bible, but shall never become an infidel. Say not, I have sometimes prevaricated, but shall never become perjured. Oh, say not, I mean to indulge my sins at present, but do not mean to become an abandoned transgressor. None can predict what you may not become, if you set out in any course of transgression. "The heart is deceitful above all things," and it may happen that you may feel quite safe at the very juncture when some darling iniquity has gained the ascendancy over you, and your steps are just about to slip. May a merciful God save you.

SERMON XI.

OBEDIENCE THE PRACTICAL TEST OF AFFECTION.

Malachi i, 6.

"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is mine honour? And if I be a Master, where is my fear?"

THIS address was made to the priests of the Lord, at a very corrupt age of the Jewish church; and applies not only to them, but to the whole family of Israel. There was corruption not merely in the priesthood: the whole church was exceedingly polluted. Every precept of the law was violated, and every rite of the sanctuary perverted. Hence most of the addresses made to them apply, not to believers, but to impenitent men, and that in all ages, and in all countries. "Oh, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," would seem a strange address to true believers; but is exactly suited to a community of hypocrites, whose profession of godliness embraced all the holiness they aimed to acquire.

It will then be no violation of the spirit of the text, if we apply it to an impenitent world, embracing those who have no show of godliness, as well as the whole family of false professors.

We find in the lips of many who make no pretensions to a change of heart, high professions of respect for the character and government of God. They claim him as their Father, and would have us believe that they respect and obey his laws. It will be my object in this discourse to inquire, WHETHER MEN OF THIS CHARACTER YIELD HIM THAT FILIAL ESTEEM, OR THAT DUTIFUL SUBJECTION, WHICH ARE DUE TO A

FATHER AND A MASTER. That the subject, however, may impress our minds the more tenderly, let us,

I. *Contemplate the government of God, and see if we can discover him dealing with all his rational creatures as a Father and a Master.*

1. In the first place, as a Father and a Master *he protects them.* This the son and the servant expect. God keeps his eye upon all his intelligent creatures, and puts underneath them his arm of mercy. Not an hour would life be sustained, did not Jehovah keep in tune this wondrous frame; did he not heave the lungs, move the heart, and brace every member and every nerve. Dangers stand thick around us, wait at every corner to destroy us, but are warded off by that unseen Intelligence, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." The unbeliever as well as the believer, holds his life, his reason, his health, and all his comforts as a loan of Heaven. While he neglects to pray, and while every mercy is forgotten in unthankfulness; while he even sets his mouth against the heavens, and defies the Power that protects him; still, with paternal vigilance, God extends to him his protecting mercy. He lies down and sleeps, and wakes, because the Lord makes him to dwell safely.

2. As a Father and a Master *he provides for all his creatures.* That bread which men feed upon, as the fruit of their own industry, and for which they thank themselves, and every garment that covers them, and the house that shelters them, are the gifts of God. No man could make his seed vegetate, or render his fields fertile, or ensure success in trade, independently on his Maker. The showers and the dews, the genial sun, and the soft breezes of heaven are entirely under divine

control, and unite their influence to feed, and clothe, and warm, and give health and vigour to an apostate world. Thus, as a Father and a Master, he makes timely and kind provision for all his creatures.

3. As a Father and a Master *he makes us know his will.* We have some lessons of instruction from the broad sheet of nature; but in his word he has opened all his heart; has made every duty plain, and placed it in the power of every son and servant of his to do his pleasure. He has plainly revealed himself and his will concerning us. He has made us acquainted with his Son and his kingdom. If disposed to obedience, we have nothing to do but to obey. And that his family of intelligences might have no excuse from marching up promptly to their duty, he has caused his word to be proclaimed in a preached gospel. Thus we have line upon line, and precept upon precept. All this we expect from a father and a master.

4. I add, *he has made our duties light.* The service he requires is pleasant and easy. He demands what is to our own interest, and prohibits what would ruin us. His law, in all its rigour, is a most kind and benevolent institution, and has conferred upon his family the richest comforts and the greatest obligations. Next to the gospel, the law of God is the richest bequest of Heaven to our world; and they were both issued with the same design—to render intelligent beings happy in the enjoyment of their Maker.

Finally, if we obey him, he smiles upon us, and provides for our *future happiness* as does a father and a master. The law itself, which he had a *right* to issue *without a promise of reward*, implies that the dutiful shall be happy. He approves of every act of duty, and will notice it with his favour even if we give to the

thirsty a cup of cold water from love to him. When we have sinned, and are desirous to return to duty, he accepts our repentance, forgives us, and loves us. Thus he acts the part of a kind Father and an indulgent Master toward all his intelligent creation. And many whose hearts have never been won to love and duty, are still sensible that God is kind, and deserves their warmest esteem and faithful service. But after all this we hear Him say, "If then I be a Father, *where is mine honour?*"

II. *Let us inquire how a kind and dutiful son or servant will treat a father or a master.*

I yoke the two together, because if faithful and dutiful, they will exhibit in these relationships very much the same deportment.

In the first place, the son *loves* his father, and the good servant his master. The attachment is very strong; and, perhaps, often as strong in the one case as in the other. You have seen servants who would die to protect their master; and the attachment of a good son to his father none will question. Let us then inquire whether that class of men who acknowledge that they have not been regenerated, but who wish to be considered very friendly to their Maker, do really feel any love to his character. While they are made the recipients of his bounty, they may feel *glad*, and may mistake *gladness* for *gratitude*. Or viewing his favours as an evidence of his love to them, they may feel that complacency in themselves which may seem like affection for him. Or making some essential mistake in their views of his character, they may love the image they have set up, and which they call Jehovah. Or being grossly ignorant of his character, they may never

feel their hearts drawn out toward him, in any very strong affection or passion, and so may not know that they do not love him. Or these things may all combine to deceive and ruin them.

If we have any love to God we must love his whole character, and must learn his character from the Bible. We must not only love the Being who waters our fields, and makes the earth fruitful, and the air salubrious; who supplies us with health and plenty; but the Being, (for he is the same,) who sends drought, and famine, and pestilence; who cuts off our comforts, and sends disease, and death, and darkness, and sorrow into our habitations. We must not only love him, who created us, who protects us, who feeds us, who enlightens us, and who offers us salvation; but him who gave us his law, gave that law its sanctions, and annexes to a rejection of the gospel the sure pledge of endless misery. We must not only love the Being who has watched the world with paternal solicitude, and has given to the different nations their prosperity and their honours; but him, (for he is the same God,) who blotted out the old world, who burned the cities of the plain, who has plagued the kingdoms of men with revolutions, earthquakes, storms, and wars. We must not only love *him* who has built a heaven for redeemed sinners, but him who has digged a bottomless pit, and kindled a quenchless fire for the finally impenitent. We cannot love the Author of all good, and hate him as the Author of what we call evil. There is but one God, and he assures us that he makes light, and creates darkness. We must vest him with all his attributes, and love him as a whole Deity, or he will spurn our affection, and count us his enemies. He is as worthy of esteem in the exercise of holiness, justice, truth, and vengeance, as when

he displays his infinite goodness and mercy. His threatenings do him as much honour as his promises. His plagues are as necessary as his blessings, his lightnings as his rains, his law as his gospel, his prison as his palace. His rod and his bread are both blessings to his children and his servants.

Now the question is, do that class of men who speak so highly of their Maker, and who would have us believe that they are so grateful for his benefits, and have pleasure in contemplating his character, but who have no pretensions to having passed the new-birth—do they love the whole of the divine character? Have they selected the attributes of their supreme Deity from the Bible, and do they disrobe him of no single perfection? Is the view the Bible gives of Jehovah pleasant to them in all its parts? Would they not alter one single trait if they might? Have they no exceptions to make when they think of him, and speak of him, and pray to him? And when they think of going to be in his presence for ever, is his character exactly such as they would love to contemplate and to dwell with?

I know that some of these questions, at times, are trying even to the believer; but he does hope, that he approves of every attribute in the character of Jehovah. But do not that class of men, to whom this sermon is principally addressed, manifest, that they are pleased with only *a part* of the divine character? Hence how frequently will they deny such of the doctrines as clash with their views of God. Total depravity is viewed as rendering themselves too deformed for him to love till they are radically changed. The necessity of such a change begets a doubt whether they are on the way to heaven. The deity of Christ argues, that men are in a state of fearful ruin from which none but an

almighty Redeemer can rescue them. The necessity of a divine influence to change the heart, cuts off the hope which they build on their own good works, as qualifying them for heaven. Any divine purpose respecting the heirs of salvation, places their destiny in the hands of God; where they are afraid to trust it. His sovereignty in regenerating *whom he will*, leaves it doubtful whether their purposes of future repentance will be executed. Threatenings of everlasting misery to the finally impenitent, exhibit God as too inflexibly holy to be *their Jehovah*.

Do they not dread these doctrines because they undermine their high opinion of themselves, and in their view mar the character of God? If they loved him, they would have confidence in him; they would believe what he says, would dare to be in his hands, would have no fear of his decrees, nor be apprehensive of too great severity in his justice.

The child, when he is received into the arms of his father, asks from him no promise that he will not cast him into the fire or the flood. If he knows that his father has written his last testament, he has no fear that he is disinherited: and the faithful servant has the same confidence.

2. The good child loves the *society* of his father, and the faithful servant loves to be with his master. Every one has observed that love will thus operate. If then God be a Father, where is his honour? Do men in their native state love to be with God. The believer will know what I mean by being with God. There is a sense in which God is every where; but a special sense in which he is present with his people. Communion with him is as much a reality as communion with a friend. In a friend we do not *see* that spirit with which

we hold fellowship. When it has fled, still all that we saw is present, but communion is at an end. God's people have endearing fellowship with him, and there is no blessing which they prize so highly. In the family, in the closet, in the sanctuary, and in the field, they mingle their souls with the great Spirit, and are happy. The ordinances are appointed for this purpose. One day spent in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

But the men we have described—do they understand the nature, and estimate the privilege of this fellowship? They think they love their Maker, and are displeased if we question their piety; but do they seek communion with him? Are they men of prayer, and accustomed to the work of praise? Do they love retirement and meditation? Do they pore much over the page of inspiration, and do they cultivate a spirit of devotion? All this is to be expected of one who loves to be with God. A few transient thoughts of him as a Benefactor are not a sufficient testimony of supreme attachment. God commands more than this, and if we are his children or his servants, we shall desire more. Else what is meant when we are commanded to "pray without ceasing?" And what does David mean when he says, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God?" Or Job, when he says, "O that I knew where I might find him; that I might come even to his seat?" Now a religion that produces none of all this—that never thirsts after God, nor grieves on account of his absence—is to be suspected as radically deficient. It may serve to deceive, but will never save.

3. A good son and a faithful servant will be *cheerfully obedient*. A dutiful temper is indispensable in either of

these stations. The son who does not cheerfully receive and execute the wishes of his father is unworthy of the name, and deserves to be disinherited. And the servant who does not exhibit the same dutiful temper is a mere slave. Let us then apply this test to that class of men who are addressed in the text. Is it their joy to obey the Lord? They will then attend well to his commands. They will read and meditate upon his law, and will make his word the man of their counsel, and will study to obey. Is this the fact? Are they employed in studying ways and means to glorify God, and make mankind happy? Do they discharge with conscientious fidelity all the duties of their respective offices and relations? Are they among the first to feed the poor, instruct the ignorant, reform the vicious? What they would that others should do to them, do they make this the rule of their own conduct? And are they *uniform* in their regard to duty? Do they yield God the service he requires, and exhibit that respect to his name, his word, his worship, and his Son, which he enjoins? Or, to express the whole in a few words, have they a tender conscience, which fears to do wrong, fears to neglect a duty, fears to violate an obligation, dreads the least deviation from the most perfect rectitude? Such a conscience is, of all others, the most decisive test of a holy mind. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye do whatsoever I command you." We may then safely rest the matter here; if men conscientiously regard all that God has spoken as immediately binding upon their consciences and their conduct,—believe them pious; but if they say but little, and care but little about duty, we must retain all our fears.

4. The son and the servant will each be attached to

his father's or his master's *family*. If a child or a servant be unhappy at home, it is an omen of evil, an evidence of some unhappy alienation of affection. If we apply this test to the characters addressed in the text, what is the result? Do they attach themselves to the family of Christ? Do they love his disciples, and choose them as their inmates, and hold sweet counsel with them, and wish their society for ever? And is their attachment stronger to those who are eminently holy than to others? If we love God, we shall love those most who wear most prominently the marks of his image. With them we shall wish to be identified in a compact, strong and eternal. Hence to hope that we love the Redeemer, while we stand aloof from his family, is absurd. "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Hence, generally, we shall find the people of God in a cluster. We may find a few strayed from the family, but we shall find them uneasy and unhappy till they come and take their place in his house.

5. The servant and the son are very *jealous of the honour* of their father or their master. They will not hear him reproached; they separate themselves from his enemies, and from the place where he is not honoured. And all this God expects from those who acknowledge him as their Father or their Master. But do we discover this delicacy of feeling in that class of men who would be esteemed religious, but who have no pretensions to a change of heart? Are they grieved to hear the name, and attributes, and works of the Lord spoken lightly of? Do they retire from the sound of profaneness, and feel themselves abused, if men in their presence will not reverence Jehovah? It must be proper to bring every man's religion to this test. You would esteem no

man your friend who could stay, and be content, where he heard you abused. Mere silence in him, while others abused you, would evince that his friendship was deceitful. Now God has assured us that "he is a jealous God;" of course he will watch the smallest deviations from propriety in those who would be thought to love him. The man who would smile at an oath, or carry on conversation with one who is profane, and show no disapprobation, will find it difficult to prove that he is grieved when God is dishonoured, and will forfeit his claim to piety. One has not a keener sense of the touch of fire than of any contact with profaneness, after he has been sanctified by the grace of God.

Finally, the kind son and the dutiful servant will wish to have *others acquainted* with their father and their master. Their own attachment is so strong, that they conceive nothing more to be necessary, than that his character should be known, in order to his being loved and respected. Apply this test, if you please, to that class of men who have no pretensions to having been regenerated, but who still insist upon it that they love God and are friendly to his government and kingdom. Do they wish to extend the knowledge of God to others? Are they grieved that so small a portion of the human family have the sacred volume, and that those who have it know so little of its contents? Do we find them among the first to propagate the gospel? Are they deeply interested in the great work that is at present going on in the Christian world? Do they rejoice at every new translation of the scriptures? And are they ready to contribute of their wealth to propagate the truth? All this must follow a strong attachment to God. And if things be otherwise with those who hope that they love him, there is somewhere a radical mis-

take. If men love the God of the Bible, they will wish others to have the Bible that they may know and love the same God. If they doubt the truth of the Scriptures, and are attached merely to some being whom they style the God of nature, then indeed they may feel indifferent whether men have any other than the book of nature. But this is deism precisely, and men would be ashamed, in the present day, to advocate a system that is becoming obsolete. In fact, there is no God of nature, but the God of the Bible. He who built the hills and built the sun, inspired the book of grace, and is the only God who can save in the hour of distress. Why should we deceive ourselves with a scheme which is rotten, or be content that others should trust their souls to some Jupiter or Moloch, that never had any existence but in the imagination of such as did not like to retain God in their knowledge?

My dear readers, we must come to the conclusion (and the sooner the better) that there is no religion without a change of heart. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." We must have that same religion which has brought others to their knees, and borne them to the place of prayer, and cut them off from the men of the world, and rendered them men of faith and of devotion, or we must die without *any*, and perish in our delusions. Religion cannot be shaped to please a carnal mind—cannot be brought down to the frigid taste of unsanctified men. It has remained the same in all ages, and will continue to demand a temper which unsanctified men do not feel, and a conduct which they do not exhibit.

We are the more anxious to do good to that class of men who have been brought into view, because we see many excellences in their character. They are neither

intemperate, profane, nor false; they are civil, and decent, and kind, and hospitable; they are often public-spirited. Hence true religion would place them among the *first* on the list of useful men. We grieve to see them lack this one thing needful, because it prevents their usefulness, and mars their happiness.

But we are anxious for another reason, which must not be concealed. We think they are entirely mistaken in their hopes of future happiness. We fear their death-bed will be a scene of stupidity or of horror. We apprehend, (and if we are deceived still we are honest,) that they are in imminent danger of being lost for ever. Their religion has too little to do with a *Saviour:* it nourishes too high an opinion of works; it is too *frigid*, too *thoughtless*, too *prayerless;* it is too much *afraid of the cross;* is not sufficiently *humble*, watchful, circumspect, heavenly-minded. We fear it is not the religion of the gospel, and will avail them nothing in the last day. We think it important that they examine their hopes, before it be too late; and if they find that they have not a religion which will stand the test of the last day, they should bow immediately to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why should men intrench themselves in a refuge of lies, to be demolished by the hail of the last day, and leave them unsheltered in the midst of that fearful storm.

If God be a Father, honour him. Devote your life to him, and yield him your richest, best affections. Be ashamed of no duty which he requires; shrink from no sacrifice he demands; and let the world know that you are not ashamed of your Father.

If he be a Master, honour him. Make his law your study, and consider his service your freedom. Then you will at last hear him say to you, "Well done, good

and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." It will then be your privilege and your honour to serve him in some more elevated sphere of usefulness for ever.

SERMON XII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SHEET ANCHOR.

Psalm cxix. 116.

"Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope."

FEW words in the English language are used more loosely than the word hope. If one feels desirous that God may hereafter renew him, he assures us that he is not without hope; if he expects to be saved *without* conversion, he hopes; and if he presumes *without any evidence* that he *is now* a child of God, he possesses a hope. None of these examples gives us the proper use of the word. Hope always fixes on a future good, and rests on present evidence. David anticipated future and eternal blessedness in the presence of his Lord, and he had present evidence for believing that he should enjoy this future good. But he was still a sinful man, for there is no man that liveth and sinneth not. His repeated transgressions interrupted his hope. If he should at last fail of the expected glory he knew it would expose him to shame and contempt in the view of all those who knew of his former expectations. He professed to love the Lord—had often expressed his confidence in his covenant faithfulness, and had been pronounced to be the man after God's own heart. And after all this, to fail of heaven, and find himself associated with God's enemies, would be dreadful beyond the power of description or conception.

Hence he prays, "Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live." He was confident that the true

believer would persevere. God had given his word that he would uphold his people, and David prays that God would do as he had promised. He believed too that the spiritual life of the saint was in the hands of God. The expectation that I may live is founded on the calculation that God will uphold me according unto his word. That holy man had no confidence in his own strength. God must keep him or he should at last be ashamed of his hope. Brethren, the same apprehensions, and the same prayer will become us all.

To understand the *foundation*, the *nature*, and the *operations* of that hope of which we shall not at last be ashamed, is a high and valuable attainment. To designate such a hope will be my present object.

I. That we may not at last be ashamed of our hope, it must originate in a *change* of the *temper* of the *heart*. The hopes of many have a far different origin. Some presume that they are fair candidates for heaven, because they have been kept from the pollutions into which many others have plunged. Their parents were more watchful and they were placed in different circumstances from other youth, and grew to manhood uncontaminated by the vices of the age. And they presume that their exemption from vice is the result of religion. Like the young man in the gospel they think themselves fair candidates for heaven, and very deserving of universal esteem, because they have been kept from the grosser transgressions of the divine law, ascribing to divine grace what is the effect of mere restraints.

Others have confidence in their good estate, because in some period of seriousness they had exercises resembling those of which others, now believers, were the subjects. They saw themselves to be in danger, had

some compunctions of conscience, felt great distress and at length obtained relief. Immediately they presumed that they were new creatures, and were confirmed in the strong belief that they should see the kingdom of God; and upon this hope they have lived ever since.

Others have been at some period of their life the subjects of a partial reformation. They have broken off from some grosser crimes, are become more civil and decent, and although they can relate no exercises resembling the operations of grace, yet venture to hope that there has been a secret, silent operation upon their hearts. Of their religion little more can be said than that "the unclean spirit has gone out."

Some build their hope on an opinion which others have incautiously expressed with regard to them. Some one, perhaps a person not qualified to judge, has expressed the conviction that they were believers, they grasped at the opinion expressed, and believed it true, and rest their souls on this sandy foundation.

Others hope for salvation because they have been admitted to the communion. In an evil hour the doors of the church were thrown open so wide, that they with all their impenitence and unbelief found admittance. They are now treated as Christians, and addressed as such, and having committed no overt act sufficient to expel them from the communion, the delusion becomes every day stronger and stronger. No one would suspect them of piety were they not seen at the Lord's table, and but for this fact they would entertain no hope of admittance into heaven. Forgetting that many will at last cry, and be rejected, "Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence," they fold their arms confident that heaven is theirs forever.

Others have hoped because of some dream or vision

in which Jesus opened his arms, or heaven its portals to their reception. A voice seemed to proclaim, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," or a text of Scripture providentially promised them salvation. Thus they rest their perishing souls upon a straw.

Brethren, none of these things are the origin of that hope of which we shall not be ashamed. It must begin in a change of temper. The carnal mind must be regenerated. The heart of stone must be taken away, and there must be given a heart of flesh. Old things must pass away and all things become new. There must begin in the soul a divine life. God must be loved and Christ received by faith. The man must be born of God, and there must appear the unquestioned features of a new man. Christ must be formed in us the hope of glory. Such must be the commencement of our religion, or the time will come when we shall be ashamed of our hope.

II. That we may not at last be ashamed of our hope, *it must render us holy.*

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." And we are taught the same truth in this text—"Christ in you, the hope of glory." Now Christ can, in no other sense, be in the believer, than as his doctrines form our creed, his temper reigns in our hearts, his example guides our steps, and his love engrosses our affections. To hope for salvation through Christ, this hope must render us like Christ. The design of religion is, that through its influence, God may "purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." We read of a hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. Gospel hope

is joined with faith and love, and will not be found alone. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity." He, then, whose hope does not make him a better man will know the pain of finding his hope perish when God taketh away his soul. It is a question placed beyond all controversy, that he, who is begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, will rise with him to newness of life. The man, then, whose life and conversation is such that he can hardly support a profession, whose associates have no hope that he is a believer, and with whom the children of God can have no fellowship, may rest assured that his hope will one day render him ashamed. To support, in the view of men, a fair profession is certainly a small part of the duties of a Christian: for, in addition to all this, we must "keep the heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." When the Christian has appeared with advantage, in the view of others, still he has a mighty warfare in his own bosom, and will have occasion to wonder at last if he finds himself in heaven. Holiness of life, then, is an indispensable associate of that hope that maketh not ashamed.

III. That we may not at last be ashamed of our hope, *it must bear examination.*

If we are afraid to examine our religion, lest it should be found *not* to be the religion of the gospel, there is evidence of conscious hypocrisy. We are to be always ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear, and if we are to be always ready to *give* a reason, we must always *have* one; and, if we have one, we shall not be afraid to examine the ground our hope. Those who have a good hope through

grace can have no fear as to the result of an examination.

Hope is spoken of as an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast—but an anchor is a useless appendage if there be no bottom in which it can be cast. Those who lose their hope as soon as they examine it, who are plunged into doubt and darkness whenever they inquire into their state, have a hope which assuredly will make them ashamed. Hence the exhortation, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith—prove your own selves."

IV. That we may not at last be ashamed of our hope it must *live without an effort.* We shall bend all our efforts to be holy and our hope will support itself.

He who finds it difficult to support the hope that he is a believer, and must be forever grasping at every word and thought that may afford him confidence in his good estate is a very doubtful character. While the Christian agonizes to keep his feet in the path of life, he hangs very loosely by his hope; while he strives to enter in at the strait gate, he considers it far less important that he support constantly the unshaken belief that he *has entered in;* the hypocrite takes more pains to keep alive his hope, than to warm his heart. It is far easier to wrest from a Christian his hope, than to wrest it from a self-deceiver. Let a close and trying sermon be delivered, and it will be frequently found that God's people and no others have resigned their hopes. They *dare* examine the state of their religion, and they *will* examine, be the consequence what it may. If the result is an abandonment of their hope, this but humbles them, and they return to God, their hope revives and they are made happy. But he, whose hope embodies

all his religion, has to make a perpetual effort to keep that hope alive, and has through the whole of this effort many apprehensions that he shall at last prove a cast-away. He feels and he assures us that he would not give up his hope for a world ; but it would be worth ten thousand worlds to him if he would. It is his mistaken hope that prevents him from being alarmed. He is on the very brink of death, but he dreams that all is well, and his dreams hold him profoundly asleep, and multiply the dangers that await him.

V. The hope that maketh not ashamed is always *interrupted by sin*, while the hypocrite retains his hope unimpaired in the midst of transgression. When the Christian commits sin he is conscious of acting out of character and his hope trembles. He knows that piety from its very nature is at war with every corruption, and that nothing but perfect redemption can still the quarrel. It is, to pursue the figure, on both sides a war of extermination. Hence the least disposition to parley with sin mars the hope of heaven. But we have seen the profane, the drunkard, the false, the contentious, the prayerless, and every other species of transgressors hold fast to their hope while they were led captive by sin. Perhaps we can name no sign that is darker. To entertain a hope of salvation, that is unshaken by sin, argues a morbid conscience and an unbelieving heart. It evinces the absence of every soft, and tender, and holy affection, and settles the point that Christ has not there impressed his image. Oh, how many with a hope like this, have passed on unsanctified to the death-bed and have at last found their hope perish when God taketh away the soul.

VI. That we may not be ashamed of our hope *others* must have a *higher opinion* of our piety than ourselves.

Unless there be something distressingly wrong in our lives others will feel *more* favourably towards us than we do towards ourselves. Suppose there is nothing in our life very immoral, still there may be coldness and indifference to religion, worldly-mindedness, covetousness, neglect of duty, lightness, and folly, which will render the hopes of others for us small, but if our own hopes continue undiminished our case will be dark. The Christian will give others better evidence of his piety than himself, because others can only survey the externals of the man, while he sees the sink of iniquity in his own heart and feels all its base and mischievous operations. The Christian would find it comparatively easy to obtain salvation if nothing more was necessary than to be pious in the esteem of others. And yet we know that the Christian finds it no easy matter to still the tongue of slander. Our Lord himself could not so live as to silence calumny and detraction. His apostles were villified, and all who are faithful in Christ Jesus must suffer, and still it is comparatively easy so to live that men shall be able to say nothing against our Christian character and say the truth. God's people cannot make bad men love them while they follow Christ; but they may so live that all their slanders shall be false, and all their reproaches groundless, may give their bitterest enemies unequivocal evidence that they love their Master, while yet they may judge very unfavourably relative to themselves. The fruits of their religion, better seen by others than themselves, will be fair and wholesome. Thus will operate that hope, which maketh not

ashamed, it will give others, not its possessor, decisive evidence of its stability.

VI. That we may not, at last, be ashamed of our hope, it must put us upon *earnest endeavours* to reach *the object of our hope.* If heaven is the object of our hope, we shall endeavour to bring so much of heaven down to earth as possible. That good which we wait for with eager desire we perpetually anticipate, and thus taste beforehand. The amazing good in prospect will employ to reach it every power of the soul. It is known to the good man that barriers, numerous and formidable, block the way of life. The danger of final disappointment is great. The indolent will fall short of the prize. We are assured that "the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." The apostle says, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The believer will labour and be anxious to know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints. Heaven will be viewed as worth all the pains that can be taken to reach that world. There will be great wrestling in prayer. The soul will put forth all its energies to break its way through the barriers of death to the fields of light. The true believer, counting the things unseen as infinitely surpassing the things seen and temporal, will labour earnestly for the meat which endureth to everlasting life. It will be seen that he is aiming at something great and invaluable. In the pursuit of this good, every minor object will lose, com-

paratively, its value; will sink from his view, and leave his mind absorbed, and his heart supremely set upon God and his kingdom. He will not count his own life dear to him, "not having on his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith" of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. In one word, the man who has chosen God as his portion, and heaven as his home, will be in earnest. A few dull prayers and a few listless efforts will not satisfy. He will feel that he has entered upon a race, and that a crown of glory is the prize. Hence, he will lay aside every weight, and run with patience. Then, on reaching the end of his race, his hope will not make him ashamed, nor will he be ashamed of his hope. I close with a few

Remarks.—1. The subject should urge us to examine ourselves, and render us willing to be examined.

The danger of being deceived is great—and the consequences of such deception irreparable. How unspeakably horrid to find on the death-bed, or, perhaps, at the very instant, that we are dying, that our hope is a dream. It is too late to repair the mischief, or have it repaired. There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we hasten. To know that the character is formed, and find it a bad character;—the destiny fixed, and fixed in perdition; no language can depict the despair and horror of such a discovery. Hence, if we can know the worst of our case, before we die, how desirable!

2. The subject should render us submissive and thoughtful in every scene of life, by which God tries our hope, and proves our faith. Comparatively, it is of no importance what we suffer here, if we may, by these

sufferings, be waked from our delusions, and escape the wrath to come. If our enjoyments in the present world should be in some measure diminished, it is a matter of small moment, if by this means we can be qualified for the rest and enjoyment of heaven. If we find that the fruits of our afflictions are to take away sin, we may rather rejoice that God will deal with us so kindly. The early Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. If our hope in heaven is unwavering, it must be about all that the good man needs,—it is that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that must satisfy us, even if it be an inheritance in reserve.

3. If our hope is such that we expect not to be ashamed of it at the last, let us not be ashamed of it now.

Men are often seen to conduct as if they were mortified at the idea of being considered believers. They have been known to make an effort to conceal the fact that they had taken upon them the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are now ashamed of their hope, or rather, of the Saviour who is professedly the object of their hope; and our apprehension is, that he will be ashamed of them when he shall appear in the glory of his Father and of the holy angels.

4. In that hope, of which we shall not at last be ashamed, we may now rejoice. "Which hope we have," says an apostle, "as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and entering into that within the veil." Thus our present hope has to do with the joys of heaven. It is the privilege of those who have a good hope through grace to rejoice and be happy. The child of God is not called to gloominess, and darkness, and sorrow, and apprehension. He is the only man that can be happy,

whatever scenes may open around him. "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet he will rejoice in the Lord,—will joy in the God of his salvation." He has nothing to fear but sin; God will take care that nothing else hurt him, if he will be careful not to be destroyed by sin. "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life,—nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,—nor things present, nor things to come,—nor height nor depth,—nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."—"All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world: or life or death: or things present or things to come: all are yours: and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

5. To so live as to sustain a high hope of heaven is the way to die in peace with anticipated prospects of future blessedness. This remark is founded on the conclusion that Christ will prove faithful to his dying people,—his promise is, "I will never leave, I will never forsake thee." This promise, I have supposed, must imply that Christ will be present with the dying Christian.

If, on this subject, I am mistaken, then this remark goes for nothing. Oh! may it not deceive the people of God.

I have sometimes tried to believe that the matter was otherwise—and I have thus reasoned:—If the people of God are, at any period of life, peculiarly unfaithful, or if they have spared, to a miserably late hour, some darling lust, some right eye sin, from which the covenant of God secures their final emancipation, he may

punish them for this on the bed of death, and then suffer them to be saved, "*though as by fire.*" And that passage which seems to intimate that when flesh and heart fail us, God may be the strength of our heart and our portion. But after all that has been said, the hope that I may wake up in death, and put forth a repentance that shall reach back and cover the sins of a lifetime, or shall reach many months back, and secure my pardon when flesh and heart is failing, and then save me the necessity of being holy in early life, is rather an attempt to hang the hope of heaven on a spider's web. And when I have thus provided a hope for some departed friend, and who died in horrid darkness, that I fear is lost, I hardly dare rest my own soul upon the fabric I have erected. May the God of mercy give you a good hope, through grace, that shall not perish when he taketh away the soul,—may that hope brighten up in death, and be uttered like that of Simeon's, in a song that angels love to hear, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

6. To live with this high hope, is to speak when we are dead. It is said of one, that though dead he yet speaketh. Of Enoch, it is said, "He walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." His story will continue to be told, long as there is a single volume of the book of God still in use. And every believer who dies, giving high hopes of heaven, and maintains a life consistent with those hopes, leaves a savour of godliness behind him that will shine through scores of years, and be brighter and brighter when the sun has gone into total darkness.

There is an eternity attached to the moral actions of every believer that can no more become extinct than

the rays of light from the sun can melt away while the sun still shines. The Lord Jesus Christ is the believer's light, and will shine upon them for ever,—and they by his light see light,—and the light they see they reflect forever. Hence every believer is a light that cannot go out,—when removed from earth he will go to shine in a nobler sphere,—a star of light forever.

7. This subject should show the ungodly how unprepared they are to die. What would be a preparation to die, is a preparation to live.

SERMON XIII.

HEAVENLY FELLOWSHIP.

1 *John* i. 3.

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

THERE is an interchange of relationship and affection between the parts of God's holy kingdom, which it is delightful to contemplate. There is no doubt a sublime and holy fellowship between the different persons of the Godhead, laying a foundation for uninterrupted and never-ending enjoyment. There is a communion and a friendship, reciprocal and permanent, between God and angels, and between him and glorified spirits, and this fellowship is kindly extended to the members of the church militant. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." What an enterprise of grace, to establish communion between a world of rebels and their Maker! And how surprising, brethren, that our repeated provocations should not have cut us off from this communion.

It will be my object to remark upon the nature and extent of this fellowship. It is acknowledged to be a subject on which one can obtain no distinctness of views without the aid of experience. If it should be a precious hour with you the next time you come to meet him at his table, and Christ should bring you into his banquetting house, and spread over you the banner of his love, you will learn more of the nature of this fellowship in that single hour, than would be taught you,

by a gospel ministry, unassisted by that experience, in a century. We are told

I. That our *fellowship is with the Father.* This fellowship originates,

1. In the relation of *Creator* and *creature.* Here is opened the first intercourse between heaven and earth. Creatures drop from his hand, and immediately raise their eye to him as the Author of their being. On this relationship is founded a most endearing intercourse. God must take pleasure in viewing his creature, in seeing it precisely the being of his choice, and encouraging it to lean upon his arm; and the creature, till alienated by some ill-fated apostacy, must take pleasure in surveying the uncreated excellences of his Maker. This relationship extends to unholy beings as entirely as to those that are holy, but through the influence of depravity it generates in their case no fellowship. God abhors the vessel he has formed, and the potsherd strives with his Maker. It is only where the relationship has not been sundered by apostacy that it becomes the basis of a pleasant and permanent communion.

2. There exists between believers and their heavenly Father the relationship of *Benefactor* and *recipient*, constituting a medium of delightful fellowship. His hands daily dispense our blessings. What he gives us we gather. He opens his hand and we are abundantly supplied. Conscious of our dependence, we approach his throne by prayer, and spread our wants before him, and he is pleased with our confidence and encourages us to repeat our requests. Thus through the medium of a kind and watchful providence, there is kept open an intercourse between heaven and earth. The benefits being dispensed with benevolence, and received with

ingenuous gratitude, lead to pure and holy fellowship between the dispenser and the beneficiary. God is also the benefactor of ungodly men, but his benefits are not received with thanksgiving, nor spent obediently, hence there is opened between God and them no delightful intercourse. They receive his mercies as the beast feeds in his pastures, and drinks at the brook, unmindful of his Benefactor.

3. The relation of *Lawgiver* and *subject* creates a tender and interesting fellowship. The moral Governor makes known his will, gives to law its sanctions, issues promises, and presents motives to obedience, and the dutiful subject becomes cheerfully the Lord's servant, and thus is generated an interesting communion. God is present by his Spirit to expound his law; and his subjects waiting to know the will of their sovereign, take pleasure in obedience, and are loved by their Lord. Hence the infinite space between God and man is filled, and the heart of the Lawgiver and his subjects mingle their affections, in a grand and noble fellowship. There is the same relationship between God and his disobedient subjects. Devils are the subjects of God's moral government, and will be under obligation to obedience forever, but depravity *mars*, and, when it is total, *destroys* communion.

4. That which crowns the whole, which blesses all the other relationships, and is finally the principal source of communion, is the *mutual attachment* which subsists between God and his people. He has put his fear in their hearts, has brought them to delight in his statutes, and to walk in them, and they have chosen him as their Lord. They claim him as their Father, and they are owned by him as his dutiful children. They approve all his character and delight in his praise,

and he takes pleasure in them, puts upon them his own beauties, makes them what he can love, and then loves them. Thus we have fellowship with the Father, and this fellowship will be increasingly sweet till we are prepared for his presence, and are joined to the full assembly of the church of the first-born in heaven.

II. Not only have we fellowship with the Father, *but with his Son Jesus Christ.* With him we have fellowship,

1. As *Redeemer* and *redeemed*. When we had forfeited our life at the hand of justice, the Lord Jesus Christ took our place, and bore our sins. To him we owe our escape from hell, and that escape he purchased with his bloody sweat and dying groans. The price of our redemption could be no less than the life of the Redeemer. And now, from the throne of his glory, he dispenses the blessings which he died to purchase, to those who are made willing in the day of his power. These thankfully receive, and daily rejoice in the fruits of his redeeming love. Thus is opened between the Saviour and his people an inexhaustible resource of pure and precious fellowship.

2. We are in fellowship with the Redeemer as the *head* and the *members*. Says an apostle, "We are members of his body, of his flesh and his bones." He is to his people a source of spiritual life, and they in a sense, not to be fully told, constitute the body of Christ. Their life is hid in him, and from him circulates through all his members, as the natural head governs the vital principles of the body. Hence he views his people as parts, *precious parts*, of himself.

The figure is changed but the same idea is retained when he is called the *vine*, and his people the *branches*.

We know that they live only by their union to the vine. Thus the church daily derives its strength and its life from Christ. For their nourishment he has graciously provided on earth a gospel feast, and in heaven an endless banquet, and if any hungry, thirsty soul would see Christ, he will be there to sustain him with the bread of heaven. I hope many of my readers will feel the truth of the text. The avenues of this communion will be opened, and we shall know the blessedness of having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

When we view the Redeemer in his human nature, there are still other sources of fellowship.

We fellowship him in his *sufferings*. From him and from us God in his wisdom may hide his face. When he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," he came so into our place that we can sympathize with him. The believer is sometimes deserted of the sensible presence of his Lord. In such a case, our trial is similar, but probably far less dreadful than his. Hence under the frowns of Heaven he pitied us, and we have a very sensible fellowship with him.

Or if men rise upon us in malice, persecute us, cast out our names as evil, and account us the disturbers of the peace, or even nail us to a cross, Christ can fellowship us. He is at present raised above the malice of men, but he did bear their reproach. He has not forgotten the impious band that united to achieve his ruin. The scribes, pharisees, sadducees, the high priest, Pilate, Judas, and the whole sanhedrim united their forces for his overthrow. Though in heaven, he still recollects the fraud, the falsehood, the treachery, and malice, which lined his path and set his temple with thorns,

He can never forget the ingratitude of that generation whose diseases he healed, whose leprosies he cleansed, whose ears he unstopped, whose blind he enlightened, whose poor he fed, whose sins he pardoned, and whose dead he raised. In these matters we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hence between him and his people, when called to similar trials, there is a fellowship of sufferings. To have been fellow-sufferers in the same exile, the same prison, the same bondage, the same shipwreck, or the same wilderness, creates, you know, an endearing fellowship. And, brethren, it will endear Christ to us, and us to him, forever, that we have passed the same desert, and were beset by the same race of unpitying beings. And the promise, you know, is that if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.

And we have experienced together the malice of the same tempter. He knew the intrigues, felt the buffetings, and bore the malice of the adversary. He still remembers the forty days in the wilderness, and can furnish us with the same weapons with which he conquered. And we are not ignorant of his devices. Still he goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But in all our sufferings from his malice, our Redeemer is nigh to help us, and has fellowship with us in our trials.

And the same is true of the sufferings incident to human nature. He endured hunger, thirst, want, pain, and poverty. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." The best birth-place that could be furnished him was a manger, the best home a cottage, and the best offering, when his mother was purified, a

pair of doves. And his life was oppressed throughout with the same poverty. He eat bread in the sweat of his face, and was glad to rest his bones on a bed of straw. Hence if his people are poor, if they lack bread, or raiment, or home, or friend, or offering, he feels for them; and there is produced an endearing fellowship. If Christ will pass with us through the same vale of poverty, and through the same scenes of want, neglect, disease, and pain, we can utter no complaint.

Even in death the fellowship remains unbroken. He felt and suffered under the cold chills of death, and that the most painful. His tender nerves quivered on the ragged nails, his temples bled under the thorns, and his heart upon the point of the spear. Hence Christ can fellowship us when we die. We shall meet with him in the valley, and his rod, and his staff will comfort us. How sweet will it be to have fellowship with him there!

And we can have fellowship with him in his resurrection. He has passed through all the terrors of the grave, he has lighted that prison, has chased away the glooms of the vault, and has prepared for us a song against that hour, "Oh, death, where is thy sting?" He has secured to his followers a happy resurrection. Angels heard him exclaim, as he rose, "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." He has styled himself the first fruits of the resurrection, and we shall all have fellowship with him in his escape from the damps of the sepulchre. As he is our head, if we love him, we shall rise with him to everlasting life. How sweet to have so finished a fellowship with our Redeemer.

But, after all this is said, the grand medium of fellow-

ship is *holy love*. We must have complacency in his character, and he in ours, that our sympathies may be perfect. He must clothe us with his own beauties before he can fellowship us, and we must have a spiritual discernment of his excellences. Hence, how certain that impenitent men can hold no communion with him. And how undeniable that our fellowship with him in the coming world will be more perfect than in the present. We shall then see him as he is, and our love to him will be perfect. Let us attend a little to this *future* and more perfect fellowship.

1. Our fellowship will hereafter be richer and sweeter, as we shall leave behind us all our fears and doubts. There remains so much iniquity in all our hearts, that the most holy have much occasion to fear that they shall never reach the kingdom of heaven. And in all our duties, our songs, and our feasts, these fears are present to alloy our pleasures. But when Christ shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. The redeemed shall be confirmed in a state of holiness and happiness. Our fears will be gone, the conflict ended, the foe defeated, the prize won, and the palms of victory awarded. Then what a sweet communion! On looking back we shall see the wilderness all trodden over, not another snare or pit in our path, not another serpent to bite, nor foe to assail. Jordan and the desert behind, our feet planted on the hills of promise, and our hearts at rest. We may descry other pilgrims, toiling, weary, tempted, trembling, "faint, yet pursuing," but our own case happily decided. And who can calculate what joy he shall feel when his fears are gone, how sweet that marriage supper where there will mingle no apprehensions of disappointment.

2. Our fellowship will be more enlightened. Here,

at the best, we see but through a glass darkly. Every view we take of Christ and truth is limited and obscure, but in heaven we shall know even as we are known. *This* is a dark world, *that will be lighted* by the glory of God and the Lamb. And our communion with the Redeemer will increase its pleasure, in proportion to our increase of light.

3. The fellowship of heaven will not be disturbed with unbelief. Faith will have done its work and be changed to vision. The veil will be rent, every object of faith be a reality, and the things unseen be distinctly developed. If at present, though now we see him not, yet believing, we can often rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, how increased will be that joy, and how unsullied that glory when our eyes shall see him!

4. Our communion in heaven will be enhanced by the absence of every unbeliever. We shall have no apprehension that any traitor has taken his seat with us at the heavenly banquet. They that were ready will have gone into the marriage, and the door will be shut. The tares will have been gathered up. In the apostolic family there will be no Judas. We shall cheerfully extend the fellowship we feel to all who shall drink with us of the river of the water of life.

5. And what is a still richer thought, we shall be holy. No body of sin and death will be there to mar the feast. Every corruption will be cured, every grace made perfect. The Redeemer will frown upon none of the holy family. Oh, can it be that I shall be there, and you, brethren, so changed! No guilty conscience to spoil our fellowship. We shall feel that we have a right there, shall apprehend no wrong motive, shall fear no repulse, and be disturbed with no wrong affections.

This busy world will not intrude its cares, to mar our pleasures and pollute our offerings. As we shall yield ourselves to the Redeemer in every song, there will be no reserve. He will be seen to deserve the whole heart, and the whole will be his. No other object will claim a share in our worship, or divert the current of our affections. Hence our communion with the Redeemer will be uninterrupted, and unalloyed. Every act of fellowship will raise us higher, and still higher in the scale of being, till at length we shall find our hearts glowing with an ardour akin to that which angels feel, and our song vying with theirs in the sweetness of its melody. Brethren, let it be our paramount concern to equip ourselves for this sublime and immortal fellowship.

6. There is something pleasant in the thought that we shall not carry to the heavenly banquet these weak and dying bodies. At these communions we are liable to be faint and weary. Sabbaths and ordinances lose at present much of their sweetness through the morbid influence of a diseased body. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. We tire amid the heavenly road. Hence many of our tears, hence many of our groans, and much of our gloom and despondency. But, when once we have breathed the air of heaven, we shall feel all the vigour of youth, we shall tire no more, we shall be dull no more. And how rich an ingredient will this be in our future fellowship!

Finally, in the coming world our fellowship with Christ, and with his holy family will continue uninterrupted forever. Much of our comfort in prayer, and in the ordinances, and in all our acts of devotion in the present life, is destroyed by the intruding thought that the season will terminate. If we had begun to taste the blessedness of heaven, and had almost forgot-

ten that we were in the body, we were soon reminded of our mistake, and were constrained to descend and have our ardour cooled by a flood of worldly cares. These Sabbaths, and these communions have their periods. We shall find nothing permanent till we come to heaven, and there nothing will be transitory. Our song and our fellowship will be increasingly new forever.

SERMON XIV.

THE WISE BUILDER.

Proverbs xiv. 1.
"Every wise woman buildeth her house."

It is remarkable that the Scriptures have adapted their instruction to every character and condition in human life. Here the father and the master, the son and the servant, learn their duties. Here the husband and the wife, the child, the youth, and the old man; the magistrate and the monarch are each instructed in his respective obligations. Hence every one should study that book, and form a character after the model it exhibits. The text will lead me, as you perceive, to address one great division of the human family. This division includes about half of our race. It will be my object to exhibit some thoughts calculated to aid in forming the female character. The text suggests a natural division, and will lead me *to describe the wise woman*, and *show that such a woman will build up her house.*

I. I am to describe the wise woman. It will be obvious that in this description I must not confine myself to any particular age or situation, but must follow her through all the various offices and relationships which she may be called to sustain. I observe, then, in the

1 Place, that *she must know how to manage with prudence and care the concerns of a family.* All other qualifications combined would never atone for

deficiency here. Inspiration declares it the business of the woman "to guide the house." Where the mother is a cipher in her family, it deranges every domestic concern, and is a certain prelude to poverty and misery. No other person can feel the interest, or endure the fatigue, requisite to the discharge of these duties. Hence that daughter, who, for any reason whatever, is kept ignorant of domestic concerns, is rendered incapable of filling the station which the God of nature has assigned her. And to be willing to remain ignorant argues a depraved taste. It should be our aim to prepare ourselves to be useful in the place assigned us, and to fill that place with dignity and honour. Hence every daughter, and every wife, should cheerfully habituate herself to the burden of domestic care.

How many when they had thought themselves equipped for the direction of a family, have needed to learn the first principles of domestic economy. That taste, which prepares a female to adjust the ornaments of her house, is not sufficient, nor that wealth which can *furnish* it with elegance; nor that ruggedness which can endure the drudgery of home; nor the whole combined. Health is an invaluable blessing, and a fine taste is a source of much comfort, and wealth has its value; but in connection with all these, there must be a nice and accurate knowledge of domestic economy, to render a wife a help-meet. The husband is ruined who does not find his house a respectable, social, neat, and happy home. If he can be more happy in any other house than his own, he is a lost man.

2. *A wise woman will improve her taste*, and her *manners*. By taste, in this connection, I mean a relish for the beauties of nature and of art; and by manners,

a suitable expression of a good taste. Some taste is indispensable in the decent and respectable management of a family. The design of the domestic relations was the augmentation of social blessedness. Mere subsistence is not all we *need*, but all we can *acquire* without some improvement of taste: and no faculty is more improveable. Its improvement must add to our innocent enjoyment, and was given us for this purpose.

I am aware that many have been considered *proud* because they exhibited taste. But the probability is, that one can be as proud of his hovel and his rags, as another of his palace and his dress. I have seen beings in the *shape of men*, who were proud of their deformities, and have exhibited no shame when they had acted the ape, and played the mastiff. *They* are proud who treat with neglect or contempt their equals or inferiors; or exhibit scorn towards those who cannot make the same show as themselves of beauty, learning, or riches. But all this has no connection with taste, except to evince its absence.

Why should not the improvement of this faculty, as well as others, render us happy? Why are the civilized more happy than the savage? Why is the landscape spread out before us unless an improved taste may derive pleasure from the view? One universal and dull monotony would have served every purpose of *utility*, aside from the pleasures of taste. The flower might have had but one hue, and the rainbow but one colour, if taste is a useless faculty. The varied sceneries of spring, harvest, and winter, are useless, as far as we can see, but to the eye of taste. Has the wise Creator, who in every thing else had his purpose, painted nature in the richest variety of shade without design? *He* cannot be charmed *himself* with these created beau-

ties, and the *brute* has no relish for variety and harmony. If done *for men*, and done in vain till the taste be cultivated, how incumbent on all who would be happy to prepare themselves to see a God employed in painting the beauteous landscape! The female especially, whose taste, when cultivated, is exquisitely delicate, who would answer the end of her being, and take pleasure in the variety and beauty of God's works, will not permit a talent so useful to be unimproved.

And with her taste there is no fear that she will not improve her manners. I acknowledge that this is a species of improvement which relates principally to the *present world*, but it has an important bearing upon religion. The Bible enjoins it upon us to be courteous; it qualifies us to make our religion useful; it repels prejudice, and gives us readier access to the heart. Ease of manners will procure us friends, extend our influence, and increase our usefulness. In a female, it creates a dignity which commands respect, an enchanting softness that ensures esteem. It is not religion, but it is her handmaid, and is not beneath the dignity of a *minister to teach* or a *Christian to learn*.

3. *A wise woman will aim to improve her mind.* This department of our nature, to which we ascribe perception, thought, reason, and judgment, is capable of vast enlargement. It is at first, like the body, small of stature; and its first operations, like the infant actions, are feeble. Like the body, it grows to maturity by nutriment; or by neglect, may remain through life in its infant state. It is amazing how circumscribed are the limits of thought in some whose years indicate wisdom. When they should have explored much of the natural and moral world, their minds have scarcely left the threshold of their habitation. And ignorance is sure to

foster base affections. Hence pride, envy, jealousy, censoriousness, suspicion, and calumny. The ignorant judge of every object by their own limited experience. Every action and every object is brought to the standard of their own contracted apprehensions; is hewn down, and shaped and moulded, to their own dwarfish conceptions. Hence one-half of the tumult and misery of our world. The ignorant have within themselves no source of happiness, and they are a barrier to the happiness of others. Like some dull domestic animal, they never go abroad for food, but stay rather and starve about the place of their home.

The mind is enlarged by receiving ideas, and by using them as materials of thought and reasoning. And these materials may be collected, not merely from books, but from the volume of nature, and from every event of providence and of grace. To enlarge the mind is merely to learn to think wisely; and is the duty of all, to whom God has kindly given the power of thought.

To be willing to remain ignorant, is to feel indifferent whether God's great object in our creation be accomplished. We have at present only begun our existence; we are destined to a nobler state. If we prove obedient subjects to God's holy kingdom, he will continue, by his providence and his grace, to ennoble our natures forever. The infant in its mother's arms, if not injured by her who should be its best friend, is yet to be an angel. All through eternity we may hope that it will be still rising to a nobler stature. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." And happily we live in an age when no man presumes to say, that the female mind possesses any natural imbecility, which must necessarily cramp its growth, or depress its manly stature.

Every wise woman, then, will enlarge her mind;

will read, and think, and reason. She will be especially ambitious to grow in the knowledge of God; will become acquainted with her own being, and with being in general; that she may be the more happy, and the more useful. Sisters, mothers, there lies a world around you, and within your reach, which it is your duty to explore. It rests with you to determine whether you will carry with you to the grave a contracted mind, or a mind large as the regions of space. Men have been found base enough to libel your characters, and have pronounced the female sex made for servitude. The reproach is unmerited, and has been promptly repelled. It belongs to you to settle this question forever, and show the slanderer that you are capable of an intellectual dignity, which can look him into deserved contempt. Endeavour in yourselves, and your daughters, to give noble examples of female magnanimity; to teach that growth of thought that shall make you and them blessings to unborn generations, and to the world.

4. *A wise woman will endeavour to enlighten and improve her conscience.* This is that faculty of the soul by which we weigh the morality of an action; than which no power of our nature is more susceptible of improvement. To improve the conscience we must give it light, and let it guide us. Every one has a conscience, and will be guided more or less by its dictates, in the way of life or death; and, if that conscience be *uninformed*, or *misinformed*, it will lead us on the route to ruin. The papist is conscientious when he worships the mother of Christ, the Mahometan when he stabs his brother, the Hindoo when he immolates his offspring, and the Persian when he prays to the sun. Paul, while he persecuted the saints, thought he did God service. There is no calculating where conscience may lead us,

if it be unenlightened by the Bible or the Spirit of God. *Well enlightened*, it guides us to happiness and heaven. But wrong will not become right because we are conscientious in the wrong. This has been supposed to be the meaning of that text, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he;" but this is a very gross perversion of a very plain passage. In a female a tender conscience is an indispensable ornament. To see her fly from wrong, as the tender nerve shrinks from the touch of fire, is her highest beauty. It casts about her a glory which no slanderer can tarnish; a beauty which neither time, nor care, nor age, nor trials can deface. She will have honour in any circle where her name is mentioned, and influence in whatever concern she enlists. These will attach an honour to her offspring, and there will rest a glory upon her grave that will long survive her ashes.

One of this description I knew, and I love to remember, and mention her. Her presence awed sin into shame, rendered the slanderer dumb, and the proud humble. All about her loved her, for she loved them. Unless she could speak well of her neighbour she was silent. Her piety was respected, because her conscience was enlightened. She gathered around her the pious and the wise, and made them happy till she was summoned to heaven. They wept at her funeral, and her mantle, I hope, fell on some who witnessed her ascension. Her children were respected by all who knew their mother, and some of them I hope will enjoy her society in heaven.

A female *without a conscience* is a frightful character. Her husband can have no confidence in her fidelity, and who can guarantee the character of her children? No prudent man will make her house his home. Her touch pollutes, and her embrace is death.

To all about her she opens the avenues of infamy and hell. To the full extent of her influence she carries misery and tears. She destroys her children, poisons the streams of friendship, breaks the bonds of affection, and chills every stream of social and celestial life. And, finally, there settles upon her grave a dark, black cloud, a cloud in which there is no bow of promise, a horrid beacon to unborn generations, warning them not to make shipwreck of conscience.

5. *A wise woman will be particularly careful to cultivate the heart.* There may be improvements made in the temper and affections of the heart, aside from religion. The *instinctive affections* are capable of improvement by other means than grace. Selfish motives, or an improved taste, may lead us to become tender, affectionate, kind, and soft, in our social and domestic intercourse.

Still grace is the only effectual source of right affections. The heart is naturally too hard to be much softened by any other than a celestial influence. The baser passions must be eradicated, holy affections infused and cultivated, and the whole life made new, by the same creative power that formed us at first. The female character *when otherwise improved* is still essentially defective in the absence of piety. We delight to see them disciplined to domestic care, we admire an improved taste and an enlightened mind, still more a tender conscience, and, most of all, a pious heart.

Religion, in a female, secures *all* her interests. It graces her character, promotes her peace, endears her friendship, secures for her esteem, and adds a dignity and a worth indescribable to all her deeds. How sweet when the mistress of a family is the handmaid of the Lord; when the mother of children is an example

of piety; when the wife of the bosom is espoused to the Redeemer, how desirable that the daughter be a chaste virgin to Christ; that the sister lean on *his* arm, who sticketh closer than a brother; that the songsters of the temple belong to the heavenly choir! How pleasant, when the absent husband can think of home, and reflect that angels watch the place, that they may guard the interest and the health of his heaven-born companion, and the children of the covenant! When about to leave her a widow, and commit to her *exclusive* care his helpless offspring, how consoling, if her character is such, that she can lean upon the widow's God, and put her children under the guardianship of Him who is a Father of the fatherless! Then he quits the world calm and happy, supported by the hope that he shall meet their mother and them all in heaven.

Religion has a peculiar sweetness when it mingles with the modest softness of the female character. So the dew-drop borrows beauty and fragance from the rose.

Females need the comforts, the hopes, and the prospects of religion, more, if possible, than the other sex. Subjected peculiarly to the trials of disobedience, and the weakness of a feebler constitution, their state, when raised by improvement, and propped with Christian consolations, is still a state of subjection and pain. Suppose one of your number yoked to a husband of acid temper, and the prey of disappointment and disease, where, but from heaven, does there dawn upon her one beam of light. But if she can look upward and descry a place of rest when the toils of life are finished; a home where she may be happy, a friend who will ever be kind, and a nature raised above fatigue, and pain, and death—then, while the pains of

living are softened by the hope of dying, and earth blotted out by the glories of heaven, she can exercise patience and submission till the time appointed for her release. Thus religion fills the cup with pleasure that was full of gall, converts the veriest hovel into a palace, and adapting the spirit to its lodgment makes it happy. Thus the hope of heaven, if that hope were a dream, smoothes her passage to the tomb, and renders religion essential to her happiness.

Thus I have enumerated some of the qualifications of a wise woman. To obtain them will require much pains and many sacrifices, but, when acquired, they are worth more than worlds. And if time may be spent, and pains endured, and ease, and health, and even life, sacrificed to acquire riches, which at the best are poor, uncertain, and unsatisfying; may not more pain be endured and greater sacrifices be made in acquiring that wisdom that will render us happy in life, in death, and forever.

Were this our *only* state, intellectual improvement would lose more than half its value: but we are to live forever; and the present state is preparatory to a future. This is but the infancy of our being, and the mind is our better part, and is capable of indefinite enlargement. The more enlarged, the happier will be our state in heaven, and it may be our lot to grow in knowledge forever. Such are our ideas of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory promised believers in the coming world.

The base suggestion, that as the female is confined at home she needs no intellectual improvement, has long since been repelled. She *may* pass through life alone; shall she become the prey of the first villain that may wish to rob her of her rights? And if united to

husband, is it not most desirable that she be capable of being his help-meet? The laws of many our of states, have wisely directed that the daughter share equally with her brother in the estate of the father; and shall she not be capable of managing her own interest?

Mothers who have not had the advantages which their daughters now have for improvement, will join me in these remarks, and will urge their daughters to husband well their opportunities, and take a high and dignified station in the grade of being. But I proceed

II. To show that a wise woman buildeth her house. The language is figurative, the house being expressive of the family. Hence, to build her house, is to promote the best good of her husband and her offspring. It would be very easy to show, in a variety of particulars, how the influence of a wise woman must subserve this object. We are not afraid to inquire in the

1. Place, how such a woman will affect their *estate.* On this subject I remark she will not render them poor. Her refined feelings, and ardent piety, may expend something in charity. But this will not diminish their wealth, for "The liberal soul shall be made fat." If she should perform less manual labour than some others, her prudence and economy will make amends, and more than amends for the loss sustained. Her *wisdom* will *save* more than her *hands* could *earn.* Not always does the woman who can perform the most labour increase most her husband's estate. Some have laboured forever and yet have made their families poor because ignorant of domestic economy. Hard labour is sometimes associated with wasteful extravagance. A wise woman will not waste her husband's estate in extravagant dress and ornaments. These are more

generally the marks of a small mind, and a bad taste. Those who are *first* in the *fashion* are sometimes *last* at the *library*, and perhaps are never there.

But if her books and her charities should draw upon her husband's estate, still such a sister, such a wife, such a mother, is an invaluable blessing. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Of what value are riches but to buy comforts. And why not spend some of our wealth to feed the mind?

But I have hinted, that it is not by mere dint of labour that the wife performs her part in the accumulation of estate. Possessed of an improved mind, there are a variety of ways in which she can advance the interests of her family. She can help her husband lay his plans, can teach his children, can draw him back from litigation, can guide his concerns in his absence, expend to advantage the fruits of his industry—and, in ways innumerable, increase their mutual interest, accommodation, and comfort.

2. She will render her family *respectable*. This is the meaning of that remark of the wise man, when, speaking of the virtuous woman, he says, "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land." He will imbibe from *her* good impressions of character, and may rise, through her unnoticed influence, to a commanding respectability. How often are children regarded with attention on account of their mother. This alone has often introduced them to the best of families. How it honoured Timothy that his mother and grandmother could be so respectably mentioned! And how it reproaches Ahaziah when said, that "His mother was his counsellor to do wickedly." It is probably true that the mother does more to

give her house its character than the father. And not unfrequently does the wise woman entail respectability to her children's children.

3. She will render her family *happy*. She will so manage as not to irritate their passions, she will concentrate their wishes, and identify their interest. Her frown will suppress every quarrel, or rather her wisdom will prevent the evil. Her example will breathe through the house a mild and soft atmosphere, that will soothe every passion. While her wisdom will enlighten them; her industry will make them love employ; her subordination to her husband, will subject them to her authority; her prudence will render them discreet, her sympathy will render them compassionate, and her active benevolence teach them charity. Her softness will sweeten their manners, her gentleness render them mild, her courtesy render them respectful, her ingenuousness render them honest, and her discretion teach them caution. Her modesty will make them unassuming, her uprightness render them just, her tenderness make them affectionate, and we cannot but hope that her religion will render them pious.

There is no resisting the combined influence of so many virtues. And what she cannot do by her precepts, and her examples, she effects by her prayers. She will often carry them in her arms to heaven, and commit them to *his* care who can sway the heart. This done, she will have a powerful hold upon their consciences. While they respect her and love her, they will be ashamed and afraid to offend her. She will train up their consciences to respect her laws, and her government will not be limited by her presence. I knew a case when the son was afraid to disobey the mother, even when she could never have known of the disobedience.

By thus laying restraint upon the conscience, a wise woman will extend her influence to unborn generations. She will generate consciences like her own, to operate when hers is released from its labours. Her mantle, as she ascends to heaven, will fall upon her children, who will live to prolong her memory and build her house.

And while the wise woman will thus bless her own family, she will extend a happy influence to others. And yet all the good she does from home, will recoil upon her own head. There will be a reaction that will bless her own house. Her kindness, her hospitality, her sympathy, her alms, and her prayers, will return into her own bosom. While she scatters blessings, they will accumulate at home. While she prays for others, many prayers will be offered for her and her family. While she feeds the poor, poverty will desert her doors. While she sends the gospel to the heathen, her own children will begin to live: thus "she that tarries at home will divide the spoil." She generates a light to shine into distant lands, and the reflected beams illumine her own habitation. And when she is dead, generations unborn will read upon her tomb, "The memory of the just is blessed."

Reflections.—1. Females see how they are to rise in the scale of being. Their state has always been a state of subordination, and in some countries incredibly servile. The gospel emancipates them. But even in gospel lands they have never risen so high as they may. And they must rise by increasing in wisdom. When the sun would break the bars of winter he does it by a mild and gentle influence. He does not summon all his fires, and storm the castle of winter with lightnings. He

merely shines, and the habitations of ice and frost, feel and are melted by his beams. So the female sex must soften the roughness and thaw the coldness of the other sex, by constant and lucid exhibitions of wisdom and goodness. Men cannot be scolded into compassion, nor can resist the melting influence of distinguished and gentle goodness.

2. You see the importance of supporting good schools. If your daughters are to become wise, and help you build your house, there must be a nursery provided where they may grow. They must have able teachers, and leisure for the acquisition of science. On this important subject, the public pulse still beats too low. We cannot rear a wise generation without expense, care, and time.

3. We see the importance of the gospel. In its absence there would be nothing left that the wise and good could value. And females although they have no vote in society, have always exerted a kind influence in its support. But for them, many a district in Zion had been laid waste. And they in the mean time promote their own mercies ; for the moment the gospel abandons a people, females lose in a great degree their influence, their respectability, and their comfort : while, under its benign influence, they are wise, respectable, and happy. Hence all heathen lands, and other countries in proportion to their ignorance of the gospel, are marked with the degradation of the female sex.

4. How important that females make the Scriptures their study. This is the book that must form their characters, and render them wise and good. This, friends, is your guide to honour, happiness, and heaven. Make it the man of your counsel, the constant companion of your solitude, the furniture of your nursery, the

subject of your morning and evening study; and it will prove the nurse of your childhood, the monitor of your youth, the light of your feet, and the lamp of your way; till at length, matured in its doctrines, and habituated to its duties, it will be your stay in death, and your law in heaven.

5. But in order to all this, you must be born again. No woman can be wise and not pious. If you die unsanctified, you will feel yourself to be a fool at the last, though possessed of every other native and acquired excellence.

The wife can be the means of rendering her husband happy or wretched, now and forever. To make him *happy*, let the conjugal affection be strong and tender. Let your bosom-friend discover in you a cheerful and unwearied attention to his wants, a charity, that can hide his faults, a patience, that can endure his roughness, a meekness, that can soothe his passions, and a piety, that can lament his sins. Let him know, that you have neither interest nor character distinct from his; that your hopes are one, your joys one, your tears one, and your cares one. Then you touch every tender string of his heart; he becomes kind to you, and attentive to the gospel. And you may be the means of bringing him to heaven. It is a rare case, when the husband is in no degree under the influence of his partner. Let that influence then be used in rendering him holy and happy. Then, when the conjugal tie is sundered, you may hope to rise together, and be kindred spirits forever, and feel a warmer and still warmer attachment through all the years of heaven.

If you are passing through life alone; or, if death has severed the cords, that bound a husband's heart to yours, and no beloved children engross your cares, then is there

a miserable world that needs your blessing. You can be peculiarly useful in making a little verdant spot around you, by using the means of grace on all about you, and urging upon them the considerations of life and glory, and in spreading abroad the knowledge of God. You can exert an influence which shall wake the energies of a sleeping generation. You can rouse to benevolent exertion, and concentrate the streams of charity, that flow to fertilize the wastes of a ruined world.

But the duty of mothers, is, if possible, still greater. Immortal beings are committed to your care, perhaps to be saved or lost by your influence. They already feel the effects of your example, and will probably feel them more and more forever. From you, rather than the father, or any other being on earth, they will take their character. You can render them idle, ungovernable, selfish, and malevolent. You can teach them to be covetous, proud, envious, censorious, unkind, and inhospitable. You can form them to a character hated of men, and detested of angels and of God. Oh! none like you can qualify them for everlasting burnings.—Or you can teach them industry, subordination, and benevolence; can make them generous, modest, prudent, kind, and hospitable: can, with the promised blessing, form them to a character approved of men, and lovely to angels and to God. Oh! none like you can qualify them to live in heaven. God has given you that influence, that authority, that affection and access, which places your offspring at your disposal. To whom will they listen, when they will not hear the voice of a mother? When her government is despised, who shall control them? Who shall love them sufficiently to teach them, when maternal affection cools? Who shall find

access to their consciences and their hearts, when barred against the approach of a mother? Mother! the name is very sweet. In all the majesty of maternal love, she can sit down by the heart and conscience of her child, and shape, and mould, and temper it almost to her pleasure. The world can be excluded, and every passion hushed to calmness, by her maternal sweetness and authority; while in the midst of the calm, she can teach them divine wisdom, fire them with benevolent affections, and give their minds a high and heavenly aspect.

How pleasant, when the mother may teach *her own child.* If common benevolence can make it pleasant to teach *another's children*, how delightful the work, when there is joined to this benevolence the strong, instinctive, maternal affection. Who, if the mother will not, shall teach the child to pray, and lead it on in the way to heaven. May she depend on a stranger, who lacks the instinctive stimulus? We must not forget that our dear children are depraved, and will choose the way to death; are in a world full of temptations, and must inevitably perish if permitted to pursue their own course.

Mothers, it may be, that your children are fatherless, and are committed to your exclusive care. To you it is left, to stamp the last impress of character, and, by your example and influence, fix the destiny of your husband's children. A voice, while I address you, issues from their graves, urging me to my duty, and you to yours. What would be their language, if your deceased husbands could appear in this assembly. Would they not with all the eloquence, which death, and the grave, and heaven, and hell can inspire, say to the mothers of their children, "Oh, teach my offspring the way to heaven! Keep them from the paths of the destroyer.

My voice cannot reach them; you must do for them what I neglected. Farewell, we shall meet soon." What an overbearing eloquence would there be in an address like this!

And, while the *father lives*, it is especially the mother's province to form the character of her daughters. You must lead them on to character, to happiness, and heaven. They wait to have you offer them your hand, they prize your counsel, and tremble at the prospect of passing this friendless world without a mother's instruction. Let them mingle with you, and form their characters under your eye, that they may have profit from your advice, and may find you their guardian in the hour of temptation. If years have taught you any thing of truth and duty, let that knowledge, like your estates, accumulate in its descent. Then every generation would be wiser, the mother would live again in her children, and soon from one such parent, there would spring a whole church, whose holy principles and correct habits, would exhale a fragrance, that would sweeten all the surrounding moral atmosphere.

I know, that in order to all this the mother must be herself a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. She, who traverses the broad way, cannot conduct her offspring to heaven. She may put the Bible into their hands, but her example will teach them to doubt its doctrines, and hate its duties; and one may easily presume which they will believe. And yet some of your children may be saved, and you perish. The covenant of God may bind them to a pious ancestry, and he may remember his covenant, and save them, while a parent is lost.

But, as many of my readers are youth, part of my address should be to them. Precious, beyond all com-

putation, is the present period of your life. Your prospect is now joyful, but by-and-bye the retrospect will place some gloomy shades in the picture. It is but honest to acquaint you, that you have embarked upon a deceitful sea. The present is calm, but soon probably your course will lead you athwart the storm. There are trials between you and the grave, and I name them merely to turn your attention to another object.

I would point you to a world where there are no trials; and, if you would ever be an inhabitant of that world, you must now direct your eye upward. There is a day of grace, and you now enjoy that day, but there follows it a moment, when God abandons the gospel abuser forever; and he does not always *destroy* as soon as he *abandons*. "They are joined to their idols, let them alone."

The most important period of the season of grace, is its vernal years. This period improved, you are saved; but, misimproved, your state is worse. And some of you are already crossing that line, beyond which your salvation, if yet unregenerate, will be less probable. How dreadful to go down into the vale of years without a Saviour, a promise, or a hope of everlasting life. A dark cloud will then eclipse your sun, a cloud, in which there will be painted no arch of promise. Then stupidity will increase upon you, while every sermon, and every Sabbath will but mature your character for the judgment. Gray hairs will but testify to your revolving years, and perhaps neglect of means, to your increased stupidity; till finally, the tempter may assure you that your day of grace is over. Oh, reach not that gloomy period, till an everlasting covenant unites you to a Redeemer.

If already you love the Lord Jesus Christ, there opens

before you a vast field of usefulness. The dying and the dead are all around you. I will not suppose it possible, that you can be wanting in respect and attention to your aged parents. You will make it, I hope, a prime concern, to aid them on to heaven. If you see your associates verging on to ruin, you will warn them, and pray for them, and by your example and influence endeavour to bring them with you to heaven.

You are to exert a mighty influence upon the rising generation. The other sex will receive a bias from your example, and, aiming to be what you approve, will owe much of their character to your sentiments and influence. If you make it your own object to be holy, and to reach heaven, they will accompany you.

It will be your duty, and I hope your pleasure, to aid all the operations of benevolence, especially the propagation of gospel light. This is a work in which your sex have a special interest. You owe your freedom, your influence, and all your comforts to the gospel. Advance a single furlong beyond its light, and you find the female sex in a state of perpetual servitude, treated like beasts of burden, and secluded from all the joys of civil and social life. Could *they* but know the blessings that fall to *your* lot, and the reason why *they* are so oppressed and miserable, they would raise a cry for the gospel *loud and eloquent as the shrieks of death*. They would not rest till they could place in the hands of their oppressors, that volume, which is the charter of *your* liberties. Then they, too, would be free, respected, and happy.

These facts have helped to wake the daughters of Zion to their duty, and I trust will keep them awake, till the light of revelation has shined into every dark place of the earth, and the principles it generates have rescued every daughter of the apostacy from her prison and her

chains. I have no fears that you will not act your part in this humane and Christian enterprise.

Females have succoured the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Saviour himself testified to their kindness, and, as we all remember, found beloved friends in the sisters of Lazarus, and a very pleasant home in their house. And after him the apostles, and after them all who have proclaimed the gospel, have lived upon their charities, and been supported by their sympathies and their prayers. All this is said without design to flatter. I should be unworthy the office of a minister, if any such motives could move me. May that gospel, which you thus support, in your kindness to its ministry, be the means of your salvation! May none of you abuse its blessings, and thus fail of the glory it reveals! And, when the Son of Man shall come the second time, without sin unto salvation, may you be among the first to shout, "This is the Lord, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him: we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

SERMON XV.

THE CONTROVERSY SETTLED.

2 *Cor.* v. 20.
"Be ye reconciled to God."

To the whole human family it is an eternal disgrace that such a sentence should be found written in the book of God. A creature unreconciled to God! Living, too, upon his bounty, subject to his control, completely in his hands, and exposed to his wrath! Does there live a man who cannot be pleased with infinite beauty, with perfect rectitude; who is at variance with the God of heaven. How has it come to pass that a creature of God has made himself so base? Was he born thus depraved, or has he since his birth transformed his soul into the image of hell? Alas! my readers, we are constantly reminded of that sad hour when the tempter prevailed, and our first parents fell. That was a horridly guilty hour. Not only did they ruin themselves, but all their race. They were destined to the curse of begetting children in their own likeness, not guilty of their sins, but like them inclined to iniquity, exposed to temptation and ruin. There is now born a wretched race, who, as soon as they breathe, rebel. Why? they can offer no reason. Infinite excellence is found in God, is seen in his law and exhibited in his providence. And is there throughout our province a general revolt? Are there none who have *not* become rebels? As God is true, there are none. A precious few have become reconciled to him, and are now approximating toward a

state of purity, and joy, and blessedness. But even yet we can cast our eye abroad, and see our world filled with rebels. What will be the issue, God knows, and he has told us. Those that are not reconciled to him must die; those that are, shall receive the smiles of God forever. The infinite God has himself contrived a way to pardon the rebel, and yet secure his own honour.

In pursuing the subject, *I shall show that sinners are in a state of hostility with God, while he is kindly disposed toward them. I shall then inquire whether there be any just cause for these hostile feelings toward God. I shall then state the terms on which the sinner can be reconciled, and offer some motives why the reconciliation should take place.*

I. I am to show that sinners are in a state of hostility with God, while he is kindly and graciously disposed toward them.

In proving these points I shall make my appeal to Scripture and fact. The hostile disposition of sinners toward God is one of the most conspicuous doctrines of the Bible. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Sinners rob God, and fight against him, and say to him, "depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "The rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, and exert themselves to break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from them." In the survey which God took of earth, he found that all had "gone out of the way, and had become filthy; there were none that did good, no, not one." All this looks like general and open revolt. It is impossible to give these texts, and much more of the same book, such an interpretation that they

shall not teach us the doctrine that sinners are hostile to God.

Let us now make our appeal to facts. As men show how they feel toward each other by the manner in which they treat every person and thing that relates to the other, so impenitent men show how they feel toward God by the manner in which they treat those persons and things that relate to God.

Let our first inquiry then be, How have sinners treated the Son of God? He ventured to come down, and put himself in the power of man. And was ever another man so cruelly treated? The world united in praying him to depart out of their courts. They rose against him, as if he had been an assassin or a robber. They glutted their revenge with his blood. They could not rest till they had nailed him to a tree. And yet their consciences pronounced him innocent.

If any suppose that Christ would not now be treated so were he on earth, it is no doubt their unhappiness to make one of three grand mistakes. They either suppose that Christ is now better treated than he was in the days of his flesh, which is not true; or they suppose that human nature is not now so depraved as then, which is false; or they have brought themselves to believe that a more improved state of civilization has tamed the ferocity of the carnal mind.

Now, how can we account for it, that Christ should be treated so unkindly by men, except by admitting the principle that sinners are in a state of hostility with God, and hence as Christ was the image of the invisible God, they made him the object of their scorn and hatred. In treating him thus, they showed how they felt toward God.

Let us now inquire, how sinners treat the people of

God. Authentic history informs us that in every age since there was a Christian on earth they have been subjected to ill-treatment. In apostolic days they began to be the song of the drunkard, and the jest and proverb of the world. Then, and ever since, when human law did not impose restraint, they were persecuted to death. Upon them have fallen the united curses of an ungodly world. When wicked men can meet in no other point they can be one in destroying the Christians. They consider them as the common enemy. Hence thousands of holy souls have gone to glory from wrecks and dungeons.

And what better are things in the present day? True, there is less blood spilt, but no less anger felt, and no less pains taken to cover them with infamy, and expose them to scorn when they "live godly in Christ Jesus." Does not every day bring us fresh testimony of the hatred of the wicked against the saints. If not, what do they mean by the common cry of *hypocrite?* Why do they take so much pains to try to prove that Christians are the worst men on earth. Why do they love to hear that they have fallen? Why pleased when they tarnish their character, and wound the cause of their Redeemer. Facts like these prove that sinners hate the Christians. And why is this, unless because they bear the image of God, and for his sake are hated. At any rate they do bear the divine image, and the world hates them, which unquestionably proves them to be in a state of hostility against God; for if they hate his image they hate him.

This hostility to God has often been clearly seen in a time of revival. Then God increases the number of his children, and enrages his foes. True, they are sometimes overawed, and when this is not the case,

they storm with rage. They have exhibited evident signs of distress as the divine shower approached. All the means and instruments by which a revival was introduced or promoted felt their malice. Indeed the world has gone out in one united phalanx to make head against the work of God. They have dreaded and opposed a revival as they would a famine or a plague.

Now, why all this? Do they not hate a revival because it brings into view the God they hate, and reminds them of that heaven in which they could not live. Again, then, do we see that they are in a state of hostility with God.

The same hostility is proved while sinners daily break the laws and oppose the government of God. Daily and hourly we witness their disregard of the law, while they refuse to shape their lives by its precepts, and yet dare to name the justice of God as the foundation of their immortal hopes. And how constant are their complaints against the ways of Providence. Hear their midnight murmurs, and see their vexation and disappointment while any adverse event transpires, or any fond expectation is disappointed.

If sinners were not hostile to God, would they not love his word and his worship? Would they treat with cold neglect the book of God, the only guide to everlasting life? And would they, as often appears, be indifferent to the praises and the prayers of the temple. Would they utterly refuse, as they do, to elect God as their master, or enlist in his service. Undoubtedly they would not try to prevent others from serving him, were they not hostile to his glory.

The maxims which sinners adopt prove the existence of a hostile temper. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." Said Christ, "Love your ene-

mies." "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Said Christ, "Resist not evil." Give me wealth first, and then religion. Said Christ, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." In every controversy let the offender ask for reconciliation, but in the controversy between God and sinners *they* are in fault, yet *God* prays them to be reconciled. It is more blessed to receive than to give, is practically the maxim of the world, but, said Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Thus sinners are all wrong. In all their maxims they make evident opposition to what is the mind and will of God. Now, could there be found this long list of opposites, were not sinners in a state of hostility to God?

And yet God is kindly disposed toward them. This appears in all he says, and in all he does. It appears in his word. He there declares that he feels kindly toward sinners, and he there asks them, in the language of real compassion, "Why will ye die?" We learn the same while we see the forbearance of God toward sinners. Not until they have sinned many years is he so provoked with them as to put them in hell. He not only lets them live in his world, but offers them mercy, and repeats his invitations, and presses them to accept, assuring them that they shall have eternal life, if they will repent and believe. All this makes it certain that God feels kindly toward sinners, while their feelings are so hostile. Let us then inquire,

II. Whether there be any just cause for these hostile feelings toward God. They seem to say that God has done something wrong. To the sinner, then, we must appeal, What has God done to offend?

His first interference with your concerns was in the

act of your creation. Was it here that he offended? True, he did not consult you whether you would *be* or *not*, nor ask you *what kind of a creature* you would choose to be. It was his opinion that you had no right to be consulted in these matters. Do you complain that God made you capable of misery? Instead of this it it should be your rejoicing that he made you capable of happiness: especially since he has put immortal blessedness within your reach, and so constituted things that misery will not be yours unless you choose death rather than life. Do you complain that you were not made angels? Instead of this, you ought to be thankful that you were not made serpents or worms. But, "shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus." "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour and another to dishonour." In the act of *creating* God has not injured you, and where no injury is done there can be no complaint.

Ever since that period he has *watched over you*, and provided for you, in all this has he erred? For parental tenderness which watched your infant and youthful days, you are indebted to God. He gave the instinct which originated a father's care and a mother's tear. He formed those powers, those limbs and eyes by which you have defended yourself. Besides all this, there has perhaps been around you unobserved a guard of angels.

> "What ills their heavenly care prevents,
> No earthly tongue can tell."

In addition to all this, God has kept his own eye fixed upon you, and has protected you with his own arm. But for this care death awaited you every step of your way. Every particle of air which you have breathed, was pregnant with death till he made it pure. He had

his eye on you in all your slumbers, and at his bidding the midnight pestilence fled, and the breeze brought life and health. Perhaps when tossed upon the ocean the waves knew his voice and were still.

He gave you your birth in a goodly land; furnished you kind friends to smooth your rugged way through life, and gave you every other needed comfort. "He opened his hand, and your wants were all supplied. His goodness has been like a river by your side. He watered your fields and brought on your harvests. He kept off the frosts, and ripened your fruits, he kept off his storm and secured your merchandise. He sent the gale that wafted India's riches to your coast. In all this did God offend?

He gave you the means of instruction, that you might be wise. Was this unkind?

He early put you under law, was this unkind? True, the law has dreadful penalties, and must not once be broken. It curses "every one that continueth not in all the things written in the book of the law to do them." Whether it was kind or not in God to put you under such a law will depend on whether the law was good. This is its tenor, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." If God deserves supreme affection, and our neighbour's happiness is worth as much as our own, this is a good law. To give creatures such a law was simply telling them to be happy. It was not only right that God should demand supreme regard, but best for creatures that they should thus regard him. And in that strong mutual affection which the law demands, men have found rich ingredients of comfort. In demanding that the law should in no one instance be broken, God prepared the way to keep misery from his creation.

It is only by disobeying this law that men are rendered miserable. But for this we had never heard the groans of the dying, the sighs of the widow, or the plaints of the orphan. Then the mourning garb had never darkened our assemblies. Man had not learned to weep, unless it were tears of gratitude.

And we may say the same of other worlds. Heaven continues to obey the law of God and is happy. Hell has disobeyed and continues to disobey, and is consequently filled with groans of despair. And how many soever other worlds there may be, they too are happy or miserable according as they have obeyed or disobeyed the law of God. If, then, the law is good, and disobeying it has made us unhappy, what charge can we bring against God for giving us such a law? The law was intended as a great bond that should bind intelligent creatures to God, and to one another. This bond, this silver cord sinners have broken, and so have stopped the communication of bliss to their souls.

But, my readers, let this be the closing remark on this point. The law which God has given is the only one which he could have given. It is the copy of his heart. He must have been a different being, and his creatures must have sustained different relations to him and to one another before a different law could have been given. If, then, sinners have any charge to bring against God on account of the law, the charge is unreasonable; they censure him for doing what it was impossible he should not do. Is there, then, any fault here?

But God has made exertions to save sinners, is there here any cause for blame? Has he not made the terms of salvation as easy as possible? Is man, while he receives pardon, subjected to any unnecessary degradation or reproach? Is any penance demanded very difficult

to perform? Does faith in Jesus Christ forbid the exercise of reason? And is the love of God inconsistent with the exercise of the natural instincts and affections? Or does religion so employ the powers of the man as to make him unhappy? Is not salvation offered on conditions the best possible. Then, where is the offence?

In pressing such a salvation upon the sinner, is not the Deity kind? In varying and repeating the invitation, and calling upon sinners by the ministers of the gospel, by alarming events of providence, by the Holy Spirit, and by an awakened conscience, to turn and live,—while God thus stands, and pleads with a guilty world from year to year, and from age to age, what is there in all this but kindness?

Would any be glad,—sinners, would it please you, could you be left undisturbed by these kind invitations of the God of mercy? Would you wish to go on till your destiny was sealed before the gospel trump disturbs you?

Do any find fault with God because he chastises them? Do I hear one say, God has torn my partner from my bleeding bosom, and my children, just as they began to entwine my heart? He sent the winds to sink my merchandize, and the incendiary to burn my dwelling. How can I love such a God? Did you ever thank God for those blessings? Did you ever pray for their continuance? Did you teach that child to pray whom you lately covered with the clods? God has, then, only reminded you of your sins in removing these comforts.

Moreover, they were at first his gift, or rather, his loan; and he has now recalled them, no sooner than you had reason to expect. He never promised you

that you should retain these comforts to any given period. Where, then, is there any ground of charge against God? He has done more than he promised; he has been kinder than you had any reason to expect. Where, then, is there cause of offence?

But, says one, God has threatened sinners with everlasting ruin, and has built a hell for them: can I love such a God? Hell he built for the devil and his angels, and he will send none of our race there who would be willing to live in heaven. All who possess such a temper as would convert heaven into a place of horror and despair, and who are more fit to be the companions of devils than of angels and blessed saints,—only these will be sent to hell. And in the sentence every holy being will join, and the sinner's own mouth will then be shut. Why, then, is there here any ground of charge against God?

Thus, through all that God has *done* and *said*, do we search in vain for any plea that can support the sinner in his revolt. Perhaps in what he *is* a plea can be found. "There clusters in his name every attribute that can contribute to render him great and glorious. The clustering of these attributes is God." What attribute, then, can be spared from the cluster? Let him cease to be holy, and what will follow? Sin, that has made every tear, every sigh, and every groan, will be approved, and the prince of devils may walk arm in arm with Gabriel. An infuriate mob from hell will soon lay waste the mansions of the New Jerusalem.

Or let Jehovah cease to be *true*, then, says the sinner, he would *not execute* his threatenings. No; nor his promises! That blessed promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," on which many a trembling believer has hung his dying hope, fails. Every angel

lays by his harp and looks out for ruin. The holy are no longer sure that they shall be happy. The foundation on which they stood has begun to sink, hell is astonished, and the universe is ruined.

Shall Jehovah be no longer just? Where then is the sinner that will consent to be treated unjustly? Devils would not consent to this.

The same may be said of every divine attribute. Alter any one and the universe is all in tears. No one dares to live or die. Is it not best then that God continue capable of government, and remain just what he is? Thus do we find at every step we take that there is no fault in God. No possible plea can be found to support the sinner in his rebellion. God is right, has *spoken* and *done* right, but the sinner is wrong, has *spoken* wrong, and *done* wrong. I hope then the way is prepared for reconciliation. But,

III. I am now to state the terms on which God will receive the sinner to favour.

The sinner must disapprove of his own character and conduct. Till he does this, God will consider him in a state of hostility. The sinner must become vile in his own eyes and polluted in his own view. He must see and hate his own evil passions, and all their corrupt fruits, and must join with God in condemning himself as a rebel deserving eternal ruin.

When brought to feel thus he will be humble. He will take to himself the punishment of his sins and ascribe righteousness to his Maker. In this condition God will begin to regard him. But this is not all that God will require.

The sinner must change his character and conduct. He must have a different set of affections, and must ex-

hibit a course of conduct altogether diverse from that exhibited in his former life. This will be saying to the world, that he now approves of the law which he broke, considers it good, and the penalty just.

The only terms on which God will ever receive the sinner to favour must include the following:

1. He must *unsay* all the hard things he has said against God; the reproaches he has cast upon his law, the unholy things he has said against his people, and against his government, and his kingdom. All the hard speeches that ungodly sinners have made against heaven, and all their trifling about hell, and the judgment, and the quenchless fire, and the never-dying worm, and the bottomless pit, and the bridgeless gulf. All the contradictions of his truth, and all the gainsayings of the infidel heart—all this must be unsaid, must be taken back. This is an indispensable preliminary in the first effort at peace. Else there can be no reconciliation. This is a law among men. If *men* are at variance they always begin conciliation with concession, and it must be thus when we deal with God.

2. When we have *unsaid*, we must *undo* the unhallowed things that we have done against the kingdom of God, and restore that which we have taken away. If any are not aware of having done any thing which they would undo, there is reason to believe that they have not made the first essay at a genuine repentance. Soon as the heart relents we can easily find that there are a great many things that we have done that must be undone. There are immortal beings, bound to the judgment, and whose eternity of bliss or of wo unutterable depends on their character, and, that character we have given, first or last, a polluting touch. These pollutions we must endeavour to wipe off. And there

are others that we have injured, these injuries we must repair. We shall find, on a little reflection, that we have, in a thousand ways, set in operation many engines of death, which, with a little timely care, we can stop, and we must stop them. All this is necessary to the first beginnings of the exercise of a genuine repentance.

3. And when we have unsaid and undone all that we can remember to have said and done against God and his kingdom, we shall find that we have entered a field of mischief where we had been so many years putting things wrong, and the mischief has become so wide-spread and desolating, that it will require a whole lifetime to put them right again. What was said of the apostles *falsely*, that they turned the world upside down, the penitent finds true in his own case. He has been scattering fire-brands, arrows, and death while he pretended to be only in sport.

4 Wherein the mischief cannot be undone it can all be ingenuously confessed. If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Thus we come upon the subject of a gratuitous pardon, our only hope of our acceptance with a gracious and merciful God. Here begins *peace*, and *hope*, and *joy* through a pardoning and gracious Redeemer. Through his kind and timely intercessions the sinner's whole debt is freely forgiven, and God is reconciled.

In addition, this humiliation and its correspondent fruits, the sinner in order to pardon must be willing to receive *mercy*. A sinner does not *deserve* pardon: the supposition is absurd. He must be willing to be pardoned for the sake of Christ, and, after being pardoned, must be willing to be an everlasting monument of a Saviour's love. He must entirely commit his cause to

Christ as his advocate, depending on him for every good which he hopes for from a justly offended God.

These are the terms. I am happy to have it in my power to add that Christ is ready to be the sinner's friend. He even beseeches you to allow him to plead your cause, and ensure your acceptance with his Father.

Let this now be the question. Will sinners quit their rebellion and turn to God that they may live? Will they do it now? When God offers a sinner pardon there must be immediate acceptance, or he takes the offer back. The impenitent cannot leave the place where they are, before it will be reported in heaven that they have accepted or rejected the message. Thus God deals with us, and thus must we deal with him. He will not allow sinners to despise his mercy with impunity.

Perhaps some are thinking about a reconciliation, but wish to know the terms. We have no new terms to propose. You will find the terms in all your Bibles, and be assured God will never alter them; no, never. He will sooner abandon his throne, and consign sun, moon, and stars to ruin. No; the terms are the easiest, they are the best that a holy God could propose.

Do any plead that their sins are so numerous and so aggravated that God will not accept them? This plea need not be made. There is an infinite Saviour, and there is infinite compassion in the heart of God. And there is one promise which throws the light of day on this subject. "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool."

IV. Let us notice some of the motives to a speedy reconciliation.

1. Sinners should become reconciled to God because he is the only being who can be the sinner's *permanent* friend. None but he can comfort you in adversity, raise your hopes in the day of gloom, or soften your dying bed. None but he can cheer your disembodied spirit, and inspire it with a relish for the angelic song. Indeed, be it a calamity or not, so it is that God has *made* no object fit to be your portion. He must himself fill the soul or you are forever poor.

2. Though God has not given the offence he makes the first overtures of reconciliation. This is wonderful condescension in God. He has no need of you, he can make his kingdom happy without you, and there is no obligation on his part why he should thus meet you with the offers of mercy. It is matter of the truest surprise that God will thus stand and plead with his creatures, is it not, then, a reason why they should be reconciled?

3. Consider farther, that God has removed the obstacles that were in the way of your salvation: this should press your conscience. He gave his own dear Son to die that you might be saved, and yet he be just. And you can now be completely restored to the divine favour. From being a wretched outcast you may become a son and an heir. What consideration can be more persuasive than this? A condemned criminal is offered all the joys of heaven on becoming reconciled to his justly-offended God.

4. If sinners do not become reconciled to God they must lie under the weight of the curse of a broken law forever. And eternity only can fully tell how heavy this curse will be. You are entreated, then, to be re-

conciled to God by all that is terrible in his anger, by all that is dreadful in the thought of being the object of his wrath forever; by all the misery that an immortal soul can suffer, or an almighty arm inflict. If God *can* make sinners wretched, and if sin, unrepented of, be of such a horrid nature that infinite goodness must be willing to punish the incorrigible forever, then, by all that is dreadful in this thought, sinners are entreated to repent.

5. I urge, as the last motive why sinners should *immediately* become reconciled to God, that it will soon be too late. There will come a day when the door of mercy will be closed forever upon some unhappy souls. Perhaps in that day some of my readers will stand without and raise their distressing cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." But the door can never be unbarred. He that shutteth and no man openeth will reply, "I know you not." You will see Abraham and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves be rejected. A father, mother, or sister enters into life, and you are lost. The very partner of your bosom takes her seat at the marriage supper, while you are not permitted to taste. Methinks there will be scenes exhibited in that day at which the very angels will weep. Will sinners, then, attend to these things, while mercy is possible? Sinners are every day perishing unawares. They are every Sabbath hearing their last sermon. It may be that some one is now reading this who has misimproved many a sermon, and is now uttering the closing sentences of the last one that will ever disturb his quiet. He has, perhaps, so nearly filled up his measure of iniquity, that only a few drops are wanting. The opposition which he may feel to this sermon, and the resistance he may make to the strivings of the Spirit may

run his measure over, and bring down the curse of his Maker upon him. It is impossible to say when God will shut up his bowels of compassion with regard to any sinner. Though he bear long he will not bear with them always. He is holy and true as well as good, The day must come when his threatenings will be fulfilled as well as his promises. And to sinners who refuse to desert the standard of revolt, th will be a tremendous day. But, since they will not be persuaded, they must go on and provoke divine goodness till the curse lights upon their heads. I add no more, I hope I am free from the blood of my readers to-day. It will be found in their own skirts.

SERMON XVI.

THE BURNING BUSH.

Exodus iii. 3.

'And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

Moses was keeping the flocks of his father-in-law in Midian, and having occasion to drive them to the desert to the borders of mount Horeb, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush. He perceived that though the bush burned with fire it was not consumed. "And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." He expected, no doubt, to see the bush consumed; but while he looked upon it, and perceived that every branch and every leaf remained entire amid the flames, it naturally awakened his amazement, and led him to turn aside and view the wonder with attention. As he approached the bush, a voice issued from the midst of the flames, which bid him pull his shoes from his feet, as the ground on which he trod was holy. God now assured him that he was the God of his fathers, and gave him his commission to go and redeem his brethren from bondage. The burning bush, with God in the midst of it uninjured by the flames, represented the church, living undiminished in the midst of afflictions and persecutions. Probably Moses had suspected that the rigors of the Egyptian persecution would untimately annihilate the church. To remove this gloomy apprehension, and encourage him to accept a commission for their emancipation, he was favoured with this vision. In using

this scrap of history for our present edification, it is my purpose to make several distinct observations.

I. The church of Christ has always been exposed to afflictions and persecutions, has often seemed in imminent danger, but has lived unhurt through every period of its long and bloody conflict. There has been a church ever since the conversion of Abel. During the period from the fall to the deluge it was very feeble, and very small, and often persecuted. In the death of Abel was fulfilled the prediction, "It shall bruise thy heel." Mention is made of but two or three eminent saints during this period, of which Enoch was one of the most distinguished. God so loved him that he took him to heaven without seeing death. He was a prophet and plainly predicted the terrors of the deluge, and of the last judgment. There seems to have been during this period several times of revival, but during the whole the church must have been comparatively small. Finally it was confined to the family of Noah, and seemed about to become extinct. It was now surrounded by a host of enemies, and must have perished without some extraordinary divine interpositions of its chief Shepherd. Jehovah granted his people the help they needed, and swept the whole of that ungodly world to perdition. The wondrous means by which he rescued his people from the general ruin, must have taught, it would seem, all future generations that destruction awaits the enemies of the church. We are amazed that Noah could live and be a preacher of righteousness one hundred and twenty years, when the church was so small, and when the earth was filled with violence, and the Spirit of God striving with them during all that period in vain.

But the covenant promise of God preserved his people unhurt like the bush which was embosomed in the flame but not consumed. In the family of Noah God continued to have a seed to serve him. But the church was soon brought very low, and at the time of the calling of Abraham was almost extinct. We see during this period the strong features of depravity, and although the history of the church is scanty and general, there can be no doubt but that it had to struggle with afflictions and persecutions. To promote the prosperity of the church God resolved to confine it principally to one family. Accordingly Abraham must leave his country, and become a stranger in a strange land, that his descendants might be preserved from idolatry, and true religion live in his family till the coming of Christ. During much of this period we find them an afflicted and persecuted people, and are often led to wonder at their preservation. How wonderful was the escape of Lot, first from captivity and afterwards from the tempest of fire that consumed the cities of the plain. How often, and how narrowly did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with their respective families escape, being swallowed up by idolatry, or destroyed by their enemies. But they were a holy seed, from whom, according to the flesh, Christ should come, and among whom, till then, God would preserve his church. Their history is a constant scene of miracles, and their very existence, like the bush that burned but was not consumed, is a living monument of God's covenant faithfulness. When the patriarchal family had settled themselves in Egypt, and Joseph was dead, and they had become Pharaoh's bondmen. Their ruin seemed inevitable. Especially, when the Egyptians, jealous of their increase, and fearful of their resentment, made a decree to destroy them, we look upon

them with awful apprehensions. But this very decree contrary to its design saved the church. It became the means of raising up Moses, and of furnishing him a princely education, that he might become the lawgiver, and the prince of that injured family. From his birth till he had the vision of God in Horeb, the Jewish family were indeed like the bush that burned with fire, but was not consumed. It is matter of the truest amazement that the Egyptians did not utterly destroy them, when they were so completely enslaved, and entirely within the power of their masters. But God had otherwise decreed. Their enemies dealt violently, but their violent dealing came down upon their own pate. Their infamous conduct awaked the wrath of Heaven, and issued in their own ruin. Still their stuggle was long and desperate. Many a time there seemed but a step between the church and destruction. On the banks of the Red Sea nothing but a miracle could save the children of the covenant. But the miracle was wrought, the sea divided, Israel escaped, and their enemies were all overthrown. When we read the history of their passage through the desert, the dangers they encountered, the sins they committed, the judgments they felt, and the enemies that lined their path, we wonder that they ever reached the promised land. But God was in the midst of them. Time could not wear out their garments, the rock watered them, and the clouds fed them, and the very fowls of heaven flew to their camp to become their meat. And when they entered Canaan we are amazed that a single month did not furnish them all a grave. That land was thickly peopled, the people at home, and prepared for war. That Israel should be able to march through that land and tread down its

mighty population and ultimately possess it all, was a most surprising exploit.

The history of that people, from the time of Moses to Christ fills the reader with constant surprise. At one time they were tributary to one kingdom, then to another, and then to a third, but all the time multiplied. When they went into captivity it seemed impossible but that the church must become extinct. But they outlived all their oppressors, and celebrated the funeral of every kingdom that ever lifted a hand to vex them. Their foes perished by a perpetual consumption, but the church continued unhurt in the very centre of the contagion. True, the church finally ran low at the time of its transfer from the family of Abraham to the Gentiles, but it never became extinct. Under the ministration of the Son of God and his apostles, the church received again a vast and glorious accession. But it was still a bush in the midst of the flames, burning but not consumed. Christ was crucified for daring to be her friend, and the apostles, most of them, spilt their blood at her altar. As religion spread under the new dispensation, it awakened the wrath of the enemy as it never had before. A countless army took the field for the destruction of the rising church. Every province where there was a follower of the Lamb, cursed its soil with their blood, till finally the enemy was weary of destroying them. The fact was seen and felt, that every execution augmented the number of believers. They could slay individuals, but the *church* itself was immortal.

Pursuing her history, from the apostolic age to the reformation, we often see her on the very margin of destruction. Under Constantine she seemed for a moment to prosper, and yet his very touch was death. He

nursed her body, but he starved her spirit, and the church had almost perished with him. But he died, and the church outlived the boasted immortality of his sepulchre. Under the Roman pontiffs the church almost disappeared. They polluted her charter, put out the fire on her altars, sealed the lips of prayer, and finally seemed to dig her grave. But the church had retired from Rome, and was living in the mountains of Piedmont. There she breathed, and bled, and prayed, till the eventful period of the reformation. Then the Lord graciously lengthened her cords, and strengthened her stakes. But for many years her sons paid for the privilege of discipleship with their blood. Fires were kindled in every province of Christendom to consume the bush. Even England, now one of the fairest provinces of Christendom, fattened her soil with the heart's blood of the saints.

And when the reformation was at length established, the church did not cease to live in the flames. Errors in doctrine and in practice, threatening the extinction of piety, have at different times overspread almost every province of Christendom. But the church has lived, and to the present day is a standing monument of the power and the truth of God.

This leads me to remark,

II. It is wonderful that there should have been a church till now, and its continuance is a living miracle. This will appear if we consider,

1. How small her number, and how feeble her strength compared with the hosts of her enemies. The church of Christ is still a little flock. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." If the world should unite

for the destruction of Zion, how small would she be in their hands. If our civil governments should become the enemy of the church, how easy would it seem to destroy her. If the impenitent should wage war against her interests, how easily might they achieve her destruction unless God prevented. The church has numerous, vigilant, and persevering enemies. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are leagued for her destruction. She can turn her eye in no direction but she sees an enemy. There is not a moment passes when there is not laid some plot for her destruction. And although God has constantly thwarted the designs of her enemies, and saved the church, when a host encamped against her, yet are we led to wonder at the vigilant and decisive movements of that unseen agent, who ever saves the church.

2. We wonder at the existence of the church, because there is not one of her number but carries her worst enemy in his own bosom. That the church should be safe, while every individual of her number daily offends the Lord, so as to deserve destruction, is that which excites surprise. The principles of apostacy and revolt are in every Christian bosom, and will be while there is a church on earth. The perseverance of the saints is a living miracle. Viewed in himself there is nothing impossible or improbable in his final apostacy. It is rather wonderful that he should *ever persevere* than that he *always* should. If religion had no other foe than the remaining corruption in the hearts of God's people we should wonder that ever one of them reached heaven.

3. We wonder that the church lives because of the numerous hypocrites which she carries in her own bosom. Not only does the church live in a world of

enemies, but the church visible is partially composed of men that hate the Lord, and hate his kingdom. This, it is perceived, must greatly reduce her apparent strength. Might we count every professor as the friend of God, Zion would be a host compared with its real strength. But she is at present a citadel with many enemies in her own bosom. That every hypocrite weakens the strength of the church there can be no question. It is their ungodly conduct that awakens reproach against religion, and arms the enemy with rage for her destruction; and they at the same time discourage the hearts of God's people, and prevent the church from moving forward as a band against the enemy.

4. The continuance of a Christian church is matter of surprise when we consider that if God's people act in character their sentiments and conduct constantly enrage the world. God's people believe, and must constantly advocate, those doctrines which wicked men disrelish and oppose, and must practice those duties which administer constant reproof to men of ungodly lives. Hence our Lord declared, that he came not to send peace on earth but a sword. For, said he, "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." And we have often seen this dreadful prediction exemplified. Hatred to the religion of Christ, has been seen to extinguish the strongest instinctive affections, and to create war, where before there was some degree of harmony. Christ assured his followers, "They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And every page of the church history testifies, that the religion of the gospel is at war with the wicked passions of men. Hence how wonderful

that religion has not long since been extinguished and the world been left without any salt to save it from moral putrefaction.

5. Another reason why we wonder that the church has not long since become extinct is that she has always depended more or less on the world, for the support of those ordinances and institutions on which depends her own existence. No age of the church can be named when wicked men did not contribute to feed the fires of her altars, and support her ministry. In Israel the wicked as well as the righteous helped erect the temple, and build the altar, and furnish the daily sacrifice, and support the family of Levi. They contributed largely to furnish those costly offerings which adorned the temple of Jerusalem. And through all the periods of the Jewish dispensation, wicked men were occasionally among the most active in promoting the external interests of the church. And since the introduction of the gospel dispensation the case has not altered. There was found at least one unconverted man at the very commencement of the Christian church, who sold his possessions, and brought a part of the price, and laid it down at the apostles' feet. And in every country where there has been a Christian church, men have helped support her ministry, and build her sanctuaries, and supply her charities, who did not hope to share in her redemption.

But, strange as it may seem, the church has lived in these circumstances ever since its first establishment, and will live till the last of the elect are gathered in. And it seems the fires are to continue to burn till the close of the period of grace. Even the millennium, which will seem to have put out the fires that flame through the branches of the bush, will not raise the

church above opposition, for at the close of that period we read that Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the globe, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went out on the breadth of of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about and around the beloved city; and fire came down from God, out of heaven, and devoured them. I think we gather from this passage that when the millennium, or Sabbath of the church is past, she will still have enemies in every part of the world who will unite their strength for her destruction. Thus the bush will still burn, but it will not be consumed, for God shall rain fire from heaven which will destroy her enemies.

Remarks.—1. If the church, as a whole, is thus safe, so are all her members. The idea that the whole of a thing can be safe and yet all its parts in danger is absurd, like that of supposing a general, without a particular providence. The bush that Moses saw remained entire in the midst of the flames. Not a branch nor leaf perished. If there is no security for the perseverance of individual saints there may be no church on earth before the return of another Sabbath. And yet let it not be supposed that the text affords any security to hypocrites; for although they may be enrolled with God's people, he may still save his people, and destroy them. Were the visible church entirely composed of false professors, there would be doubt whether it would not become extinct, but there are mingled with the ungodly professors enough to ensure the continuance of a visible church. But I suppose the security prefigured in the text to belong only to those

who are real believers, and whom God knows will finally be admitted to the joys of his kingdom.

2. How vain have been the efforts of the ungodly to destroy the church. She has lived, and can live amid all the fires they can kindle. She has often flourished most when persecution has raged with the greatest vehemence. Hence was derived that saying, "*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.*" And it is as well for the world at large as for the church, that their efforts are unavailing: for the saints are the salt of the earth, hence, were the church destroyed, the world would perish too; of course, their only safety is in their defeat. If they achieve their purpose, they undo themselves.

You have known men to attempt their own execution, and been prevented. Their failure was their safety. You have known youths arrested by the arm of paternal authority when setting out in a career of ruin. Their defeat saved them. The same will be the case with the enemies of God's kingdom. To whatever extent they injure the church they will hurt themselves. If they could destroy the church they would ruin the world. Every thrust they make will recoil upon their own heads.

3. How useless and ungrateful are the fears of God's people. They are useless for they achieve nothing. They are ungrateful for God has already done enough for his church to deserve her confidence. If he had ever seen her desolations with indifference, if one promise of his had ever failed, if the church had ever found him her enemy in the hour of distress, there would then be ground of fear. But no such thing is true; no season of her distress has failed to move his pity, he has never turned a deaf ear

to her prayers, no one of his numerous promises has ever failed, nor did her enemies ever find God their friend in a season of his church's conflict.

4. What abundant cause have God's people to rejoice in his covenant faithfulness. There is nothing but God that Christians love so much as the church, and while the church is safe it must make them happy. In her safety every thing dear to us is safe, in her ultimate triumph we shall find our own salvation. The subject, then, is calculated to make Christians lift up their heads. To not be happy when there is such abundant cause for joy, will argue disaffection to the interest we have professed to espouse, and will cast upon us the suspicion of treachery. This is a case I wish to provide against, lest in my dying behaviour I dishonour him who laid down his life for me. If I am not happy when dying, impute it to *derangement*, unless it will the less dishonour my divine Master to conclude that I have always been in the gall of bitterness, and under the bonds of iniquity, and am now deserted of him to prove that "I am about to go to my own place." The church has always been so safe, and with it every interest of mine, unless I have interests that are distinct from Christ's interests, and then I am an unbeliever, and have no part nor lot in the matter. There can have been no failure of the everlasting covenant. God will do as he has said. And, in doing so, if he does not glorious things for me I have only to lie down and die with shame, and the one hundred and forty and four thousand who are about the throne of the Lamb, will say forever, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And the whole multitude will utter their loud and long amen.

SERMON XIV.

THE TRUE GOD A SURE DEFENCE.—No. 1.

2 *Kings* xvii. 33.
"They feared the Lord and served their own gods."

When the king of Assyria had carried captive the ten tribes of Israel, and placed them in different parts of his empire, he brought back other men with which to people the cities of Samaria. But as these strangers had no fear of the God of Israel, while they occupied the consecrated territory, he sent lions among them, that committed such ravages that complaint was made to the king of Assyria. He immediately gave directions to send thither one of the priests that they had brought captive from that land, that he might teach them the manner of the God of the land, and thus induce him to be propitious to its new population. He came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught the people how they should fear the Lord. He was no doubt an idolatrous priest who had been accustomed to officiate in the idolatrous worship of the golden calf. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and finally, being unable to see any wide distinction between the calf and their own favourite idol, paid very little regard to the established worship. They made priests of the lowest of the people, and offered sacrifices in their high places. Then follows the apparently paradoxical remark of the text. "They feared the Lord, and served their own Gods."

By their fearing the Lord we are not to understand that they had that fear of the Lord which is

the beginning of wisdom, else they would not have served their own gods. The sense appears to be, that they paid some attention to the established worship of the calf but devoted their principal zeal to the idol worship, to the worship they had imported with them into their new territory. And this is declared to have been the manner of the Israelites whom they had carried captive. They pretended in their national religion to pay some kind of homage to the true God, but still practised the worship of Baal. But that all this show of homage to Jehovah was offensive to him there needs no argument to prove other than to state the fact that it was an idol worship which he could not accept.

But the question urges itself upon us, Have we any thing in these gospel times that savours of such a spirit. We boast of our superior light, but are we not conversant with the same indifference, and the same lightness that was practised by the Samaritans two thousand five hundred years ago? Let us trace the resemblance between some of the features of *that age* and *this*.

I. There was evidently great indifference felt as to what God was worshipped—Jehovah or any other god. Where the true God was pretended to be worshipped under the image of a beast that had horns and hoofs it was to be expected that he would claim nothing more of his worshippers than might be claimed by any other idol. There might be some sacredness of names, or ascription of attributes or works to the Israelitish gods that they had not been accustomed to give their idols, but the untutored Assyrian, and Mede, and Persian would not discern the difference, and would be more impressed by the form of the image, than by

any ascription of abstract qualities that might be supposed in the one that was not in the other. And is there not the same indifference felt now, by very many what God is worshipped, or what is the very same question, what attributes are ascribed to the God we adore. How numerous is the multitude that care very little whether the God they worship is so holy that he would suffer heaven and earth to pass away sooner than permit one jot or tittle of his law to fail; or so indifferent to sin that he will save all men even without repentance;—whether he is so wise as to know the end from the beginning, and will work all things after the counsel of his own will, or is so unfixed in his purpose as to never have determined whether he will save one, or ten in the whole of the human family;—whether God is a sovereign, and will do his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, or is so weak and inefficient that he will suffer a worm to defeat his counsels, and a fly to frustrate his purpose;—whether he shall have decision enough to fix unalterably the rewards of a Saviour's sufferings, or leave it a chance whether he shall not have squandered away his blood;—whether he shall have a pure and holy family about him in heaven, or shall martial a band of miscreants;—whether he shall have a church on earth that breathes the temper of the skies, or the fœtid and blasphemous fumes of the pit;—whether his word shall be all truth, or none of it truth, or a *part* of it; and his people have a *sure* word of prophecy to rest upon, or their feet stand or sink in the quagmires that skirt the bottomless pit;—whether he exercises over the world a government so particular as to notice the falling of a sparrow, and number the hairs of our head, or exercises so general a providence as that

empires only shall deserve his notice, and our little selves, at least our few little sins, escape his inspection. How few in a whole congregation of worshippers care whether he be a God that will require the hearts of his people, or will be satisfied with the soulless, spiritless, external ceremonies, whether he have any record kept of the sins of his creatures, and any day appointed when he will judge them, or he shall hear and bear without rebuking, the oaths and curses of a whole apostate world? That whole cursing and damning community, that breathe moral pestilence upon every wind that blows, do you not suppose that they would prefer a God that should neither see, nor hear, nor know when insult is offered him, and blasphemy uttered? Would he not corrupt the public faith, were it possible, till he had excluded from it a judgment, and a hell? So the Samaritans cared not if supreme worship be offered to Succoth-benoth, or the golden calf.

II. We witness in many men, who profess to be decent attendants upon the worship of Jehovah, a total disregard, *what is the temper and conduct he will require in his worshippers;* whether they shall be heavenly-minded, and lay up their treasures there where God is, or may be sordid, and grovelling in their views, and in their habits, and be the veriest ungodly, churlish souls in all the creation of God;—whether they shall be kind, and courteous, and benevolent, or act out all the coarseness, and savageness of unsubdued nature;—whether they shall be meek, and patient, and forgiving, or may pour forth all the wrath, and malice, and hurry, and impatience of one just broken out from the enclosures of crime, and chains, and infamy;—whether to

show mercy to the men who are sacrificing themselves upon the altars of devils, and hold them back, is kind and Christian, or whether one may live upon the gains of iniquity, and thrive and fatten upon the damnation of souls;—whether to bless the men of the world is a duty at all, or whether we may, with the same divine approbation, pamper their lusts and passions, and prematurely plunge them into everlasting fire;—there is resting extensively a doubt whether the spirit of the gospel is peaceful or contentious, is proud and overbearing, and stubborn and refractory, or yielding, and kind, and amiable;—whether men may not drink of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of devils; may not love the world more than believers, and still live harmlessly within the enclosures of God's covenant; may not please and satisfy the world more than the church, and the enemy of souls more than God, and still maintain unbroken, and unimpaired their high claim to a seat at the supper, and a mansion in the skies. So the Samaritans cared not whether their gods demanded virtue in their worshippers, or were equally contented with lust, and crime, and blood. "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods."

III. There is the same indifference felt as to what doctrines constitute the essence of the gospel.

Men presume that they are hearing the gospel when the doctrines of the divine decrees, of election, and of divine sovereignty are reprobated, and scowled upon as the doctrines of perdition, while these doctrines are plainly found, in one shape and another, on almost every page of the Bible. They consider it the gospel if they hear vilified and abused the doctrine of the permanency of God's everlasting covenant with his people,

or the divinity of Jesus Christ, or the eternity of future torments, or they hear advocated the supremacy of some light within that shines above the brightness of the inspired page. In one word, the mass of ungodly men do not discriminate what truth is, nor what the gospel is, and, of course, do not very much care whether they hear the true gospel or another. There is, in fact nothing that men care so little about as God, and what relates to his truth, and kingdom, and glory. That gospel, which they profess to believe, they will not take the trouble to hear often. They will not keep the Sabbath, nor care to be in the sanctuary, nor care to have others keep Sabbaths, and attend upon God's worship. To speak the whole truth, religion and God are the things by which they hold the most loosely possible, and for which they will make smaller sacrifices than for any thing in the whole circle of human interests. They would not give as much annually to sustain the worship of God as they would bestow in one evening on the theatre, or expend at one sitting in the grog-shop, or gamble with in a single game, or squander in one excursion of pleasure. They would barter away all the interests they have in God, and truth, and heaven, for a dinner of herbs, for a mess of pottage.

We shall naturally be led now to inquire, of what avail can a religion be that takes so loose a hold of the heart? What did it do for the strangers of Samaria? Did it secure the divine presence and blessing? Did it establish between them and God any permanent covenant? Did it bring down the rains and dews upon their territory? Did it even keep the lions off? And it may be asked, that multitude that now hold loosely by every thing religious, what their professed regard for God will do for them?

1. Will it secure them a religious character?

Even this may be doubted. If religion is worth nothing the world will say it *is* nothing. If we hold so loosely by it that we would barter away all its interests for a shilling, the world will believe that we esteem it a worthless religion. If to gratify a passion, or secure an interest, or secure a friend, we would change our religion, or be without its ordinances, and place our posterity upon the crumbling verge of infidelity, may we not well doubt whether we shall be able to save our sinking reputation as the friends of Christianity. The world will believe us religious exactly to the extent of the price at which we would sell our religious interests. Hence it would seem that the great mass of ungodly men cannot escape the charge of hypocrisy in any profession they make of esteem for God's character, and kingdom, and glory.

2. Will their indefiniteness of views and feelings on religious subjects tend to their peace of conscience? If there is much light in the mind it will not. Men who have really given the gospel a serious and frequent hearing have seldom failed to discover that their sins are unpardoned, and their souls unsanctified, and they in the gall of bitterness, and under the bonds of iniquity. They take so little pains to please God, and get to heaven, that they lose all the pains they do take, and go on unhappy all the way to the grave, and to perdition.

3. Does the little regard that ungodly men pay to divine things increase their advantages of obtaining salvation? I fear sometimes that the *opposite* may be the effect; that the careless manner in which they attend upon divine truth may harden their hearts against its sanctifying influence, that the few shillings

they may pay for the support of the gospel—less than they would expend upon the most worthless concern of life—will induce the habit of feeling that the gospel is of no value.

4. Will this loose and indefinite regard to religious things save the soul? No; if it will not secure peace of conscience, nor increase the means of salvation, nor even secure a religious character, it surely will not save the soul. No! men will go down to hell, wearing all the different shades of disregard to God, and his kingdom.

5. Will it lay the passions, and still the appetites? No! the soul that is not filled with God must be ever on the reach to find something else to fill it that is not God, and must fly from vanity to vanity,

"And find no end, in wandering mazes lost."

Each object, as it seizes it, will say, happiness is not in me.

6. Will it soothe the bed of death? No; that will be a time of decision, and to have not been honest with God will, in the retrospective glances of that hour, be the most horrid and tormenting glance. Men's duplicity in the things of religion, will be the ghost that will haunt them on the dying bed.

7. Let the subject, then, teach us the value of decision in the things of religion. If men have any regard to God, let them have enough to save the soul. If they hear his word, let them *pray* and *repent*, and do works meet for repentance, and then they live forever, and God will keep the lions off while they live, and keep off the roaring lion when they die, and bring them to his kingdom at last, where they may bask in the beams of his face forever.

SERMON XVIII.

THE TRUE GOD A SURE DEFENCE.—No. 2.

2 *Kings* xvii. 33.
"They feared the Lord, and served their own gods."

When Israel went into captivity under Shalmanezer, king of Assyria, supposed by the ancient Hebrew writers to be the same with Sennacherib, God condescended to give the reasons why he thus dealt with those who had been long his covenant people. "They had sinned against the Lord their God," [read from 7th to 17th verse,] "therefore the Lord was angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight." How amazing is the condescension of God, that he would thus stoop to give a reason of his conduct to the very men who had awakened his indignation and his wrath.

Doubtless it may answer some important purpose in his moral government—that his very enemies be convinced of the righteousness of his dispensations. By this very means every mouth will be stopped and all the world become guilty before God. He will thus keep up the fear of him and the dread of him among the nations, and he will hold in restraint the very enemies of his throne and of his kingdom. It is added as an item of guilt on the part of Israel that their conduct had affected Judah, and had induced Judah to walk in their statutes, for which the Lord had rejected all the seed of Israel. This evil effect of their example induced the Lord to reject them, and afflict them, and deliver them into the hand of the spoilers, until they had cast them out of his sight. There is nothing that men are more accountable

for than their influence: the bearing that the conduct of men shall have upon their neighbours, may constitute the most prominent item of their guilt—God may destroy the wicked sooner than he would, because he will protect from their contaminating example the men who are exposed to be injured by their vices. This was manifestly the fate of Israel. They had stayed longer in their land, and the foe had been held in check had not the kingdom of Judah been in danger from the example and influence of their idolatries.

The divine penman now goes back to rehearse the matter from the beginning, and speaks of God as having rent Israel from the house of Judah. This would seem like shifting off the blame of their apostacy upon the Creator. But we remember that nothing is more common in Scripture, than the ascription of the same deed both to God and man. God is said to have hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and still he charges upon Pharaoh the crime of hardening his own heart. He is said to have moved David to number Israel, and yet we find him punishing David for this very act. It is said of the enemies of Israel that God turned their heart to hate his his people, and still he punishes them for hating his people. These texts, though there are many others like them, are sufficient to show that the Scriptures are familiar with the ascription of the same act, both to the Creator and the creature.

Should we now recur to the history of that transaction, we may perhaps discover reasons why there should be this ascription of the same event to two distinct agencies. When Rehoboam was about to take the kingdom, the people of Israel, headed by Jeroboam, complained to him that his father had made his yoke heavy, and prayed that he would lighten it. He took counsel

of his princes, and answered the people roughly, and the result was, that the ten tribes revolted from the house of David. They made Jeroboam their king, and he led them into idolatry, and the result was that the wrath of God was kindled against them, and he sent them into captivity from which we are unable to say that they, to any very great extent, ever returned. Now, what are the facts in this case, that would go to show that the transaction was of divine appointment, and by the divine agency? In the

1. Place, we see some reasons that God had to be offended with the house of David, and why he should sever from his family part of the kingdom. In the latter part of Solomon's reign he had gone into a state of dark and guilty backsliding; had multiplied his wives and given up his heart to pleasure. He had become the richest and most powerful prince on the face of the earth. The spirit that led David to number the people, had led Solomon to feel proud in the extent of his riches and his power. Hence Rehoboam was led to answer roughly and proudly the prayer of his people, when they asked to have their yoke lightened. This pride of royalty God would check and would punish. He had so threatened David for his sin in the case of Uriah. And we see in his successors, sufficient reason why he should now punish the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. Hence we shall not be surprised to find the divine agency employed in severing the kingdom.

2. We find that when Rehoboam had gathered together his one hundred and eighty thousand warriors to reduce the rebellion of Israel, that God forbade him to go up to fight with his brethren, but bid every man to return to his house, and offered, as the reason of this requisition, "This thing is done of me." Thus are we led to

see the evidence complete, that the division of the house of David into the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, was in consonance with the divine plan and through the divine agency.

3. We find, moreover, that God had, even in the time of Solomon, directed Ahijah, the prophet, to show Jeroboam that he should be king over ten of the tribes of the children of Israel. We have a record of the facts in the eleventh chapter of the first book of Kings, (from the 26th to the 40th verse.) Now that which God would direct his own prophet to foretell, must be an event that his mind has purposed, and his providence is pledged to accomplish. And he condescends even to offer a reason of this resolve of the divine mind. Because they have forsaken me and worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the God of the children of Ammon. Thus a father's sins may create mischief in his house ages afterwards.

Let us now inquire what there is to show that it was all a human transaction, and that though it led to the apostacy and ruin of Israel, they still deserved the punishment that came upon them.

1. There appears something suspicious in these complaints—as no good reason can be found why they should complain of the yoke they had to wear under the reign of Solomon. He enriched and advanced the kingdom, and did all that could be done to make his subjects easy and happy. There was peace during all his reign. They suffered not by invasion during his time, and never had to jeopardize their lives in the high places of the field. They abounded in provisions, and money, and merchandise, and had, it would seem, all that heart could wish. Now a people who, at the close of a reign

like this, would embody their complaints and petition for a redress of grievances, would exhibit *prima facie* evidence that they had very depraved hearts, and that probably something else, and not the matter mentioned, was the ground of their grievance.

2. The Israelites achieved their own separation and ruin, by adhering to the counsel of an impious and unprincipled Jeroboam. He, doubtless, instigated them to prefer their complaints, that he might have a pretence for seizing the sceptre of the ten tribes, before Providence gave the signal. They ought to have seen and been aware of their wickedness. It does not excuse men's sins, that they have presented to them insidious and powerful temptations. We may not give up our minds to be under the control of any other mind, till we know that the mind that guides ours is infallible. Else we must be responsible for all the results as if we had guided our own steps.

3. There was precipitancy in Israel's determining to be a kingdom by itself, till they had asked counsel of the Lord, whatever confidence they might have in the integrity and ability of their leader. True he had been marked out as a king by the Lord's prophet, but the transaction was private, and could be known to Israel, only as Jeroboam in the pride of his heart, had without authority divulged it. And his known character ought to have made them doubt whether their interests would be safe in his hands. Men may not resign their own judgment and presume on the divine protection and guidance, unless they look well, and wisely, and providently to their own interests.

4. The people of Israel, and Jeroboam with them, took upon themselves the whole responsibility of their separation and their undoing, by forsaking the worship of

the true God. "It shall be," said the Lord, "if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house as I built for David, and will give Jerusalem unto thee." Thus would the promise of God have secured Israel's prosperity, if they had walked in the counsels of the Lord. While, then, the purpose and providence of God made Israel a distinct people, and they, as it would seem, laid the train for their own undoing; we see in the story every feature of a mere human transaction, laying the foundation for guilt and for desert of punishment, for everlasting reproach and self-destruction; *God* rent Israel from the house of David, and yet Israel *rent itself* from the house of David, and chose its own king and him a wicked king, who drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam.

It is evident, then, a man may do infinite mischief—mischief that shall not be finished in his own age or generation, the stain and the shame of which shall adhere to his blood, and pollute his memory. Jeroboam is held up as an example of wickedness, in all the generations after him, till the time when no one could tell where the tribes dwelt. And even to this day, when not a trace of that people can, with any great assurance, be found, that man who was their leader in this revolt from the house of David, and from the worship of the true and living God, is held up as on a gibbet to warn all the generations not to copy his wickedness, lest they partake of his plagues.

The sequel is awfully admonitory. Israel departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, until the Lord removed

them out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants, the prophets. "So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day."

Remarks.—1. This subject should lead us to reflect on the immutability of all our own moral actions. It was not very far from a thousand years before Christ, when Jeroboam instigated Israel to revolt. And now, almost three thousand years afterwards, the curse is still resting on the house of Israel. If that portion of the seed of Abraham has not become extinct, as the promise would seem to tell, how incalculable is the weight of that man's iniquities—and whoever else might sin with him, and all Israel sinned, still how immeasurable in their moral turpitude are his crimes, who began the whole train of mischief.

2. How inflexible is the holiness and righteousnes of God—unpardoned sin he never can forget to hate. Sin not purged away in a Saviour's blood, will never lose its odious aspect, though under a process of punishment many thousand years. And how can we, with such facts before us, doubt but that, towards the incorrigibly wicked, God may keep his anger for ever.

3. The subject leads us to adore the wonders of God's moral government.

An event may be so his own that he appointed it, and would not let another defeat it, and was the mighty power that kept all the agents in life, and sustained and strengthened them while in the service, and there may be great sin and unpardonable in the transaction, and still God do only right, and the crime and guilt all belong to the agent that is governed and controlled.

4. The subject will lead us to reflect upon that text,

"No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself."

There is not a transaction of life, if wicked, done in the seeing or the hearing of our fellow-men, but may go to involve *them* in guilt, and operate upon their character, and history, and destiny, when they may have perished a thousand years since. Hence we must ask those *around us*, and they *us*, what *we* and *they* shall be when these heavens are dissolved. The character of man is so pliable that it may be easily changed for the worse at any period of its formation, and no touch of moral influence fails to change it, hence every man lives where he is giving character to a world. And when, at last, we shall read the history of these moral results, we shall feel it to have been a terrible thing to have lived in such a world, where souls are spread out around us on every side, whose destiny will depend on their character—and that character connected with our conduct.

SERMON XIX.

THE MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE.

Psalm xcvii. 2.
"Clouds and darkness are round about him."

When our Lord had assembled his disciples to eat with him the last paschal supper, it was a moment of amazing interest. The devil had put it into the heart of Judas to betray his Master, and the machinations of darkness were in rapid and successful operation. A few hours would pay the price of blood, seal the doom of the traitor, and scatter the little flock. There would be great weeping in the church, and equal joy without. Our Lord could have averted that storm, but his purposes of mercy must then have failed; hence he let his power sleep, and gave the hosts of hell the opportunity of a triumph. He had yet one lesson to teach his disciples, and would instruct them practically. He rose from supper, laid aside his upper garment, took a towel and girded himself, poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel. He came to Simon Peter. Said the astonished Peter, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" The Lord answered, "What I do thou knowest not *now*." What could be more surprising to him than that his Lord and Master should offer to perform for him so mean an office? But the astonished Peter would live to see the mystery solved; "thou shalt know hereafter." He would learn a lesson of humility, and be prepared to teach it to all nations.

But the text is not of private interpretation, and may teach us, that *many things transpire under the present ministration of divine providence, which to men are very mysterious.*

It will be my object to bring into view some of these mysterious events, and afterwards inquire into the source of the mystery.

I. I am to notice some of the events of divine providence that are mysterious. It cannot be expected that I give a very enlarged catalogue of these events. I will be sufficient if the few that I may notice suggest others that are obvious to every reflecting mind. I name,

1. *The limited spread, and small success of the gospel.*

It was published in Judea eighteen hundred years ago, and the injunction was that it be preached to all nations. Our Lord had power to cause this command to be obeyed. He could have raised up the proper instruments, and could have given the truth access to the conscience and the heart to whatever extent he had pleased. A very few of his disciples, in all ages, have been desirous to execute this last will of their ascended Lord, and have done some part of their duty. But the number has been small, and their efforts so insulated, that very little has been done. Three quarters of the globe are yet unacquainted with the book of life, have never heard of a Saviour's death, or been invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Of the eight or nine hundred millions who inhabit the globe, six or seven hundred millions are, up to this day, the worshippers of idols, attributing to a block of wood, or a bar of iron, the perfections of Jehovah, and offering them the

homage he demands. Almost the whole population of Asia, computed at five hundred millions, are perfectly ignorant of God and the Saviour, as the beasts that roam their deserts. The fifty millions of Africa are in a condition no less deplorable. Among the two hundred millions of Europe can be found millions in a group who are involved in almost total moral darkness. Of the fifty millions in the two Americas, something like four-fifths remain to be taught what be the first principles of the oracles of God. And the islands of the sea are, with a few exceptions, so many moral deserts. Thus the gospel of salvation, the forlorn hope of a perishing world, the invaluable bequest of a dying Saviour, the only guide of the living, or hope of the dying, the celestial charter of a blessed immortality, at the end of sixty generations, circulates only through a little corner of this revolted world. A few millions enjoy its noonday beams, and others its twilight, while more numerous millions are immersed in the shadow of death.

From some regions where the gospel has been, it seems to have taken its everlasting flight. Scarcely an inch of that territory where prophets taught, and where apostles bled, can be considered within the limits of the church of God. Jerusalem, and Antioch, and Ephesus and Rome, and Carthage, where truth once had a lodgment, are but so many provinces reconquered by the prince of darkness. And where the gospel tarries still its success is small. Compare the number of professors with those who are without the pale of the church, and they are lost in the superior numbers that turn their back upon the communion. And what numbers of those who feed at the table, will not at last sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, we dare not calculate. Beyond a doubt all are not Israel that are of Israel. We

know that many in the last day will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence?" to whom Christ will respond, "I never knew you."

Many ministers of Jesus Christ, at the end of a long life, have exclaimed, in the language of the prophet, "who hath believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The British missionaries laboured twenty years, in the islands of the South Sea, ere they could tell us of their success. Some very able men of God, have been heard to say on their death-bed, that they were doubtful whether they had been the means of saving a single soul. They have feared that God had merely employed them to bring the fate of Chorazin and Bethsaida upon an abandoned multitude. Now in all this there is something very mysterious. If Christ issue a gospel, why suffer it to travel round the world so slow? Why fertilize here and there a little spot, and leave the residue of the world a desert? If he design to bless our race, why not render his gospel, wherever it is proclaimed, the wisdom of God, and the power of God? In an enterprise so dear to the heart of God as that of rendering men holy, one would think that he would embark all his attributes. "Clouds and darkness are round about him."

2. There has been something mysterious in *the success that has attended the propagation of error.* Why will the blessed God give his enemies opportunity to fill the world with lies? The more firm our faith in the promise, that all nations shall, one day, come to his light, the more of mystery is there in his suffering the enemies of truth to have *any* success. Just when the gospel had commenced its course, Mahomet was permitted to impose his delusions upon a hundred millions of souls. And as the darkness of paganism began to

be dispersed, popery riveted its chains upon another hundred millions. Many districts of our world, which were once blessed with a pure gospel, have since become the prey of error. How many sectaries have arisen, and grown in numbers and in influence, whose delusions seem too bare-faced to deceive any but a fool. No error seems too gross to forbid its circulation. The Swedenborgian and the Shaker, who could have collected their creeds no where but from the reveries of Bedlam, have not failed to gather about them a community of madmen. And we could name other sects, whose fundamental doctrines have no foundation either in Scripture, or in common sense, and still they find adherents. An *impostor* will gain a host of proselytes, while he who proclaims the *truth* has scarcely made a convert. I know that error finds in the depraved heart a soil that is congenial, while for the reception of truth its fallow ground must be broken up. Hence no surprise is felt at the fact that wicked men should love error, but God is the Governor of the world, and can check its progress at his pleasure, and that he does not, is our surprise.

I know the truth will finally triumph. The witnesses, whose souls cry from under the altar, will yet see every opposer at their feet. But why the *temporary triumph*, that God allows to the enemies of his gospel? Why must good men so often encounter chilling opposition in every effort they make, and so frequently seem vanquished? So Israel encountered many a defeat in contest with the very people whom God had devoted to destruction. I do not say that faith has no answer to these queries, but that it must look often through a dark cloud. Even in the present day when the finger of God writes *success* on every banner of his hosts, still he continues to allow the

enemies of his gospel to hope. Every pious effort awakens new opposition, and passions that had lain dormant are enlisted against his kingdom. One of the once holiest cities of our land, was lately enlisted, with its wealth, its eloquence, and its influence, against the immaculate glories of the Lamb. Now, why will God throw influence into the hands of his enemies, and block up the way of his people. God could fill the world with truth in an hour, and say to Zion, "arise shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is arisen upon thee." While "the hearts of men are in his hand, and he turneth them as the rivers of water are turned," why will he allow the world to be overrun with error? He has promised it to his Son, who is, one day, to "reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." Now why will he keep his Son out of the promised inheritance so long, when he could so easily put down error, and give success to his truth, and bring every knee to bow to him! "Clouds and darkness are round about him."

3. *The gifts bestowed upon bad men who abuse them, while many men of piety have smaller talents, is mysterious.*

Said our Lord, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." "Not many wise men, after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." The fact is unquestionable that men of the finest talents have often been the avowed enemies of the truth. They have managed wisely, and pleaded eloquently,

the cause of the adversary, and have spent their influence, and their lives to prop the pillars of his sinking empire. Hume and others of the family of infidels, who own him as their father, lavished upon a bad cause the energies of a mighty intellect. They wanted nothing but the aid of truth to give immortality to every page they wrote. Their destiny to forgetfulness is because they served a bad cause, and a bad master. Every age of the church has had employed against her many of the noblest geniuses, and her foes can never plead that they were foiled because they lacked the ablest of advocates. And yet many who have been eminent for piety have been comparatively wanting in powers of mind. They met the approbation of their Master, having employed in his service all the talents that he had given them. If they failed in eloquence or influence, still by their example and their prayers, they pleaded nobly the cause of truth, and will stand high at last in the estimate of heaven. Their names will be remembered when every argument, and every orator employed in the cause of the adversary shall have sunk into everlasting contempt.

We are not prepared, however, to say, that irreligion can boast of a balance of strong argument or good sense on its side. Argument has always been weak, however specious, when at war with truth, and good sense has been misnamed when associated with infidelity. Good argument must be founded in truth, and truth is the image of being and of fact, and will not lend its aid against its own honours. Now the mystery is that God should ever arm his enemies with talents to thwart apparently his purposes of mercy, to contradict his truth, to libel his character, and abuse his people.

Will his providence make provision for strong and

bitter opposition to the very salvation he proclaims? Will God undertake to subdue a rebel world to allegiance, and raise up in that same world men ably qualified to neutralize the whole spirit and import of the very overtures he proclaims?

Why does he not blast the intellect and paralyze the tongue that lend their influence to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Why not wither the arm employed in efforts to dam up the flow of his mercy? Why not touch the lips of his people as with a live coal from his altar, and render every child of his an eloquent advocate of the doctrines and duties of his salvation. "Clouds and darkness are round about him."

4. *The afflictions of good men, while the wicked are so extensively prosperous, appear mysterious.*

Understand me not to say that *ungodliness* hath the promise of the life that now is. And still the fact cannot be controverted, that many who have set their mouth against the heavens, seem to thrive well under the present ministrations of divine providence. There attend them uninterrupted health, long life, fulness of bread, and success in all their schemes, till they are emboldened at length to deny that God made them, or that there is any omniscient eye to see them. And because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil; while cotemporary with them are seen good men, who become habituated to disappointment, poverty, and pain. Now, why will God suffer this in *one case*? Whom would a kind father smile upon, and bless, and prosper rather than his own children? When was the world blessed with worthier men than the prophets and apostles? And what class of men have ever suffered more? "They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea,

moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

The summary detail that Paul gives us of his own toils and sufferings, cannot be read without strong and painful emotions. He speaks of himself as having been compared with others; "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger, and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." And the long list of martys since Paul could each rehearse a tale that would torture a tender heart. Ages have rolled by, when the dungeon, the rack, the cross, and fire, and fagots, and every other instrument of torture, that ingenuity could invent, have done their utmost to rid the world of its best benefactors. And the providence of God, as if the hand of malice were too slow, has hewn down the best of men in the morning of life. The ministers of religion, the missionaries of the cross, the pillars both of church and state, have received a mandate to quit the world, at the moment of their most extended influence, and greatest usefulness. They

reached an eminence that qualified them to address a world, and rendered their services, as men wou ldjudge, indispensable to the prosperity of the church, and were then swept into the grave. So fell Dwight and Worcester, and Mills, and Hall, Everts, Cornelius, and Wisner, and Payson, and the churches adopted in their fall that mournful dirge, "Clouds and darkness are round about him."

Or they sometimes live but to suffer, and groan, and weep. God does not allow his people in this world a downy bed, or the conveniences of a palace, doubtless because he sees that such would not be the safest route to heaven. Their religion often procures them trials, and plants upon their brow a crown of thorns. Whether they have any more trials than *they need* is not now the question. No doubt God could sanctify them by his Spirit, and take them to heaven through a less stormy passage. Nor can their trials be such as to render it doubtful whether God loves them. And still it is sometimes a mystery, that God's dearest people may not have more refreshments in the wilderness, and fewer pains on their way to his palace in the skies.

In the meantime the wicked prosper. Health attends their persons, and success their enterprises, and there is poured into their lap a profusion of wealth, and pleasures, and honours. And they live, it may be, to scourge the church, to scare the timid, and vex the faithful, and stop the tardy, and wring from aching bosoms, midnight complaints, and agonized prayers. Thus they flourish like the green bay tree, and by a hardy constitution and a daring mind, rise superior to all the plagues and pains incident to holy men. The basest of human beings have sometimes measured out a hundred years, have attended the funeral of every pious

cotemporary, and have even blown the trumpet of revolt in three centuries.

And it would be infidel not to confess that God had their life in his hand, and could have rid the world, at a word, of their contaminating influence. The very men who are famous, and weary themselves to commit iniquity, and would keep a thanksgiving if they could see the church exterminated; whose only prayer is that God would hate and curse his people; these very men live by divine appointment, and feed daily on the charities of Heaven. All this transpires under *his* government who holds his people dear to him as the apple of his eye, and has engraven the walls of their sacred city on the palms of his hands. How can we wonder that the weak in faith are sometimes put to a stand by events like these, and are led to say, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." "Thy way is in the sea, thy footsteps are not known?"

5. *The poverty of the liberal, while the churl is opulent, is another mystery.*

Ours is a *miserable* world, and might be meliorated in its fall, if the *generous* were uniformly *wealthy*. We meet with cases of distress that mere sympathy, if we have no oil nor wine, cannot cure, misery that cannot be washed away with tears. And if we can add a few crumbs of charity, they may only aggravate the misery attempted to be relieved, by creating a taste that cannot be gratified, or men may lack these sympathies, but have the means of their gratification. Many know not where to bestow their fruits, and their goods, while the poor may beg unpitied the crumbs that fall from their table. But with this misery they give themselves no concern. The wounded may be in the streets, but

they can pass by on the other side. The widow's fires are gone out, and her little ones are hungry, but it brings no tear into their eye. Some Macedonian prayer is heard from the wilderness; immortal beings are going on to the judgment without a Bible, and are finishing their probation without a hope of immortality. But why disturb them with these foreign and frivolous complaints? They but shut their ears, and grasp their purse the harder, for every outcry of want that may assail them.

We can see them glory in the means they *have*, but will not *use* in curing the miseries that lie spread around them. One man could furnish his town with the gospel, but lets it lie a waste place; another could build them a sanctuary, but suffers the place where God's honour dwells to crumble into dust; another could support a domestic missionary, and repair the desolations of many generations; another could charter a vessel with Bibles for India; another could educate an evangelist, and another support him in some outpost of Zion; and yet the whole of them combined will not unite to buy themselves the gospel, but squander away the Sabbath as the beast does.

Now were all this wealth in the hands of the benevolent, it would seem wise and good in him that governs the world. The poor would be supplied, the heathen evangelized, the gospel supported, and the blessed God honoured. It seems impossible that this should not, then, be a happier world. The ruins of the apostacy would, then, be more than half repaired, and there would be seen approaching the millenial year of the world.

Now the mystery is, that God should, in so many cases, give the wealth to one, and the benevolent sympathies to another; should place the talents where they cannot

be used, and the kindness where it has no medium of display. The wealth rusts for want of use, while benevolence bleeds over misery which it has not the ability to relieve. When occasionally the two things meet they are like apples of gold in pictures of silver. I could mention characters that will go down to posterity with honour; in which were identified opulence and charity. With these to be *useful* was to *live*, and, though dead, they yet live, in the streams of charity they created, and which will continue to flow till they have fertilized the wastes of many generations. But I could name others who had hearts to feel, but had not the means of relieving the wretchedness over which it was their painful luxury to weep. The immortal Howard, having devoted his patrimony in the cure of distress, poured out his tears over other miseries, which the smallness of his resources, and the shortness of human life, disenabled him to relieve. To adopt the sentiment of his eminent eulogist, "he visited all Europe, not to indulge in its luxuries, but, to dive into the depths of dungeons, to plunge into the infection of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain; to take the guage and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to compare and collate the distresses of all men, in all countries. His plan was original, was full of genius and humanity: It was a voyage of discovery; a circumnavigation of charity." Such were the efforts of one who felt for the miserable beyond his ability to administer relief. He did honour to the finest feelings of our nature, and erected to himself an imperishable monument in the memory of the miserable.

And it would be easy to name men of the opposite character, who have the means of making the wretched

happy, but on whom no child of sorrow can ever fix a look of gratitude. But we are happy to say the world is now undergoing a change, by which men of this description must become as contemptible as they are wealthy. God is saying now to the world, that the silver and the gold are his, and many, at his bidding, are casting their wealth into his treasury, and the father, who will not now aid the cause of charity, will make his heirs ashamed. A suffering world has raised its cry to heaven, and God has heard, and will have its miseries relieved. But how strange that for so many thousand years, he should have permitted wealth and charity to be so extensively dissociated, when their union would have so mitigated the miseries of the apostacy.

6. I mention but one other fact under the government of God that would seem a mystery, *the small degrees of sanctification in his people.* Knowing that they would never arrive at heaven without his interference, God has undertaken to sanctify them by his Spirit; and has even promised that when he begins a good work he will see it consummated.

There is, then, a pledge given that God will make all his people like him. Hence we are confident that he has never abandoned one that he has begun to sanctify. And still how little of the image of God is seen in his people. And I have no reference now to false professors, but to those who give the best evidence that they love the Lord Jesus. The pious kings and patriarchs of Israel all polluted their memory, and marred their enjoyment by sin. The best men whose history is recorded in the volume of inspiration, are seen to have come greatly short of what God would have them to be. And the Christians of the present day, are, at the best, poor, polluted creatures. How liable to become

worldly, to pollute their consciences with crime, and dishonour the sacred name into which they have been baptized. In every prayer they make, one who is a stranger to his own heart is liable to infer that they have polluted their hands with capital offences against the laws both of God and man. Now, why will God permit his family to be so corrupt? Would he not love them more if they were like him? And their songs how much sweeter, and their sacrifices how much more acceptable, and how much more abundant their comforts, and more exalted the glory that would redound to their Redeemer, if they were more holy. And they are God's own family, whom he will have near to him in his kingdom, and who are to reflect his glory forever. He intends to go on operating in their hearts till he makes them like himself, and yet he permits them to carry about with them, till they die, a body of sin and death. It is wonderful that an everlasting covenant should bind such polluted creatures to their holy Redeemer; that their sins do not forfeit them the endeared relationship, and cut them off from hope, and happiness, and heaven. And equally strange, on the other side, that since God could, by a single word, render them perfectly holy, he should still permit them to progress so slowly in their way to perfection. Why not say to the whole family of believers, "I will, be ye clean," and thus, in one moment solve the mystery, and render millions of hearts happy? "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Remarks.—1. *The subject should render us humble.* Our view of every subject is so limited and so obscure, that no very great degree of confidence can become us. It may give us joy that *God knows* how every thing

will terminate, and that in the end *we shall know* that God has done all things well. But while we know so little, and with regard to many things hardly venture to have any opinion, the deepest humility becomes us, and the greatest modesty when we think or converse on the ways of God. A *proud* man, in such a world as this, is a monster, and not to be tolerated till he is smitten with a deep sense of his own insignificance. To be learning all we can is our duty, and still it is our duty to feel till we die that we have only read a single page of the book of Providence, and have read that page by the dimmest twilight. We may have as enlarged hopes of the discoveries of futurity as we please to cherish, may calculate one day to know even as we are known ; but to have at present any confidence that God has made a full disclosure on any subject, is to lose sight of our own noviciate, and prepare ourselves for sad and everlasting disappointment.

2. While the present state of things is calculated to destroy all self-confidence, it prepares the way for the most enlarged faith. The less we *know*, the greater occasion is there *to believe*, the less we are permitted to discover of our path with our own eyes, the more absolute the necessity that we lean upon the hand of God. If we walk in darkness, and have no light, the command is that we trust in the Lord, and stay ourselves upon our God. If we can but walk *safely*, though it be by starlight, we may rest assured that, by-and-bye, when the sun has risen, we shall see that God has led us in the right way, that we might go to a city of habitation. Surely our confidence in him may rise to the highest pitch of assurance. If it be important that we learn, before we reach heaven, to rely with the most entire confidence on the truth and faithfulness of God,

then are we placed in the very world where we can learn this lesson to the happiest advantage. One could not learn to *believe* in heaven, learn to trust where no danger is, learn to wait when every good is present, or be diffident when the whole mystery is developed. And we cannot tell now how much good it may do us in heaven to have been bred for that world in the very twilight that now surrounds us. It may render heaven a far happier world than it would otherwise have been. This world may hereafter be seen to have been the nursery where *only* we could have learned some of those first lessons that lay a broad foundation for progress and joy in the acquisition of heavenly science. And we may a thousand times bless the Lord in our future songs, that no farther light was granted us when we passed this desert. Let faith be strong and we can hear songs in the night. Job sung sweetly while his night was the darkest. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." His song was the dictate of faith which darted through the cloud, and perched him upon the summit of Tabor, where lay smiling in his eye the fields of promise. There he sung, and Moses after him, and there if we can but climb, we shall see a wider, and fairer, and more fertile Canaan than gladdened believers under the darker dispensation. Come ye disciples of the Lord Jesus. "Try, try your wings,"—let your faith put forth its mightiest efforts, and soon you rise above this twilight, and ten thousand intricacies of providence disclose their mystery, and you see a wise, and great, and good Jehovah managing, with unerring skill, the darkest operations of this beclouded world.

SERMON XX.

THE WAYS OF GOD UNFOLDED.

John xiii. 7.

"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

The operations of divine providence afford the believer a subject of contemplation, the most delightful. Little as he can know in his present state, and darkened as must be all the views of a finite mind, when employed in tracing the footsteps of an incomprehensible God, still the research is pleasant. When vision fails, faith operates. The solution of one mystery, leads us to anticipate the moment when others, darker still, shall be solved. The light that has dawned shall shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. It is the God *we love*, who is seen to operate. Not only can he do no wrong, but he will yet permit us to see that he has done right. A child passing a wilderness in a dark night, in company with his father, would not feel alarmed if for a moment, he could not see the hand that led him. Parental love secures the child, and filial confidence renders him content and happy. The wilderness has its limits, and the darkness its period. Creatures, from their very structure, can *never* know but little, and at present, comparatively nothing. It is enough for us, that he who *operates*, knows; he who *moves* the machinery, has decreed that the result shall be wise and happy. And yet it is our duty to obtain all the light we can. We should be far less ignorant of God and his works, if we were more industrious in our researches.

Half the mystery of which we complain, we create by our inattention and our depravity.

I. We can at present know *but little* of the ways of God.

1. We often *mistake the divine purpose.* In many cases the effect, which God designed to accomplish by a particular train of operations, is already produced, while yet we are looking out for other effects. Deceived as to what was God's main purpose, we imagine the event distant, which has already transpired. God will give us at present no other account of his purpose, than that contained in his word, and this relates merely to our duty, and the consequences of obedience. It may be the design of God to accomplish many things, which we should have supposed, would never have entered into his plan. He may permit men to act basely, merely to illustrate the depravity of their hearts, and thus corroborate the testimony of his word; or that his justice may shine the more conspicuously in their condemnation; or that they, in their overthrow, may become a beacon to warn others; or that his people may be rendered the more grateful, for the benefits of restraining and sanctifying grace. We are altogether too ignorant to determine what is a *desirable* event. We may lament as an *incurable evil*, what God may esteem an *invaluable good*. Hence we may labour to defeat an event, to accomplish which, all the attributes of omnipotence are embarked. Our prayers and energies may be excited to agony in warding off a storm, which, it is his purpose, shall come down upon us in all its fury. We watch at the couch of a languishing child; our life is bound up in his; if it die, it seems to us that God must design to undo us; and yet, perhaps, that child was given us that it might die in our arms, and be the means of our sanc-

tification. We dread some apprehended revolution, as calculated to sap the foundations of our civil liberties, and yet God may see that it will enhance our blessedness. Hence it will often happen, that God and his people will seem to be at strife. They aim at his glory, and suppose that he would be honoured by an event which, should it transpire, would injure them, and cover his throne with a deeper darkness. But in a case like this, God will approve our motives, but will thwart our purpose; and when the series of events is finished, we shall see and confess that we were mistaken, and that God was wise.

2. The *remoteness* of the *cause* from the effect, renders inexplicable many of the events of divine providence. When we see the wondrous machine in motion, we look for results too soon. Forgetful that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, we expect him to finish his work in an hour. The wheel we now see in motion will move another, and that another, and another, and another, till at length the *hundredth generation* will see accomplished, an enterprise which *we see begin*. Voltaire about a century since sowed the seeds of the French revolution, and thus commenced a train of events, that probably will continue in operation till the last day. Jeroboam instituted an idolatrous worship, which resulted twenty centuries afterward in the ruin of Israel. Mohamed more than one thousand years ago, compiled a system of falsehood, which now chains in the dungeons of death, perhaps one hundred millions of souls. But we must be infidels too, to deny that these are all events of Providence, by which ultimately, God will cover himself with glory.

And the subject will apply itself to things nearer home. A careless father admits into his family to-day a worth-

less labourer, whose pernicious principles and example debauch and ruin his descendants to the fifth, and perhaps the tenth generation, and, it may be, ultimately render his family extinct. A mother, to cover the villany of her son, denies a fact or asserts a falsehood in his presence, and thus teaches her child to prevaricate, and entails crime and infamy upon her remotest posterity. A father breaks the sabbath, and deserts the sanctuary, and thus places his offspring, for many generations, in the seat of the scorner. There is really no calculating how extensively may flow the streams of corruption; how remote from its source may be the outlet of those waters, that carry wretchedness and death in their course.

Or if we look at the brighter side of the picture, the prospect will be more pleasant. David, and Moses, and Asaph, three thousand years ago, penned those divine songs, which *to-day* produce joy and gladness in every part of Christendom, and will continue to multiply the happiness of believers, till the second coming of the Redeemer. Many a pious mother a thousand years ago, taught her children those principles, which, to-day secure to her a pious posterity, and to the world a host of benefactors. Our forefathers founded those institutions which are now the pillars of our land, and taught those principles which are now the stay of our churches, and the prolific sources of our revivals. And when the great drama shall be finished, we shall, doubtless, see many causes and their effects separated from each other, to the distance of a hundred generations. In these circumstances, how can we hope that in the passing events there will not be many things inscrutably dark and mysterious. If a force were seen in operation in this country, which was to produce its effects in the north

of Europe, or in some isle of the Pacific, who could hope to remain at home, and comprehend fully the structure of that machine? And the case is the same when *time*, as when *space* separates the cause from the effect. Standing by the little rivulet that issues from a mountain spring, how can we hope to measure and explore the effects of that stream, when it has traversed a continent, and is pouring out its waters into the bosom of the ocean. Could we follow the eye of God down through the unmeasured tracts of time, and see every plan finished, all mystery would vanish. Thus, perhaps, the angels, born to noble enterprise, and raised by their immortality above fatigue, feast their expanded minds, on the interesting novelties of a wonder-working God.

3. We are often involved in mystery, because we do not see the connection between the powers operating and their results, *even when not very remote*. Hence many causes appear never to have produced their legitimate effects, and many effects appear to have transpired without a cause. There *was* a cause which produced the effect, but one or the other was hid from our view. The human mind was, perhaps, incapable of looking upon both at the same glance. A child surveys a complicated machine, but is able to see no connection between the motion of a water-wheel, and the effect produced. We see a stream of liquid fire pouring from the bosom of a cloud, in a moment we see an oak, which had withstood the storms of a century, rived from its summit to its roots, but how this effect is produced, we are unable to say with any good degree of assurance, after the researches of six thousand years. There is a philosophy that can neutralize the liquid fire, there is an eye that can trace the forked lightnings; there is a

hand that can bind together by intermediate links, the most remote extremes. To one thus endowed, and to him only, there can be no mystery. The cause and effect may be *near*, and the connection *natural* and *visible*, and yet that connection hid from us. Peter could see no relationship between the humiliating act of the Redeemer in washing his feet and the lesson of condescending kindness which that act was intended to teach. Paul, with all his faith, wondered that he must be tortured with that thorn in the flesh. And many a Christian, since then, has quarrelled with his circumstances, as calculated to retard his spiritual growth, and has endeavoured to thrust himself from a situation, where he was learning the best lessons that heavenly wisdom could teach.

4. Many things are to us mysterious, because we see but in part. But one scene of the grand drama falls under the view of any one generation. We see the commencement of a process, which will not be finished till the judgment; or we see a result, whose remote cause lies hid among the ages that have elapsed. When the last day, which will see every scheme accomplished, shall throw back its light upon the long train of causes, which shall then be seen yoked with their specific results, the darkness of which we now complain, will all have vanished. A parent educates his son, without any design whatever, except to procure him the means of being wealthy and happy. Knowing the worth of an education, he, in his turn, educates *his* son; till at length there rises up in that family, perhaps not till the tenth generation, a Brainerd, a Schwartz, or a Vanderkemp, by whose pious labours the very desert is made to blossom, and vast tracts of its wastes are redeemed from endless desolation. But this

grand result can never be known till the morning of the judgment. *Then* we learn why that first youth was educated. A man is wealthy, but covetous to a proverb, and has an only son. All the wealth he can grasp he hoards up for that son, but *he*, in the mean time, becomes dissipated, and dies a vagabond, and the father, destitute of an heir, is constrained to put his overgrown estate into circulation, and it finally drops into the treasury of the Lord, and is expended in sending the bread of life to the perishing heathen. But this happy result can never be fully appreciated till the period of the judgment. Then we shall know why the father was permitted to become penurious, and the son dissipated. And the same is the case with regard to almost every movement of the wheels of providence. There is nothing *finished* in the present world but character, or, if finished, the result is not declared. We can see the whole of nothing. Our station is at some point on the winding banks of a stream, whose source, and whose outlet hide themselves in the darkness of an unmeasured distance. One great object of the judgment will be to show that God was wise and good in all he did, and this can only be seen when every event is finished. Then the widow will know why she was so early bereaved. The mother will know why death tore her infant from her bosom. The aged minister will see why he wept away his life over a hard-hearted people Then the believer will no longer see through a glass darkly. The night that now hovers about him will be dispersed, and the full blaze of a noon-day sun shine upon every unfinished scene through which he is now passing.

5. Another source of mystery arises from the contrariety between the means employed and the end achieved. The very course is pursued often which we

should have judged would have defeated the object. Pharaoh must feed the family of Jacob during the years of famine, and to compass the object Joseph must go into Egypt a slave. Who can wonder that the patriarch exclaimed, "All these things are against me." The captive Jews must enjoy the patronage of the king of Babylon, and to compass this design Daniel must be cast into a den of hungry lions. On that dreary night what believing captive dared to hope that God was dealing kindly with his people. And they must be in esteem with the court of Persia, but to effect this a gallows must be erected for Mordecai. When the gospel was to be disseminated, there must be upon the Roman throne a cruel, ambitious Cæsar, who should not shrink at the sight of blood till the world was subdued at his feet. The idea of communicating instruction by means of tracts, originated in the mind of Voltaire, was first used in the propagation of infidelity, and is now among the best means employed by the Redeemer in subduing the world to himself. It was the divine purpose to cure the world of infidelity; to accomplish this, God directed that the experiment should first be made, whether a nation could be happy without the Bible; this experiment must be made in the very centre of Christendom, and France must be the scene of its operation. The Scriptures were committed to the flames, and so complete was the conflagration, that, at the close of the scene, a search was instituted and continued in Paris for four days by several enterprising men, without being able to discover a single copy of the Bible. The dreary result you know. Infidelity has the heart of a tiger: blood is its proper nourishment, and it can feed upon its own bowels. The leaders in that enterprise invented the guillotine, and died its beams with their own blood. The

Jehovah whose word they had proscribed, swept them all as with the besom of destruction, into one untimely grave. The tale cannot be told without emotion. It was the song of death, and the work went on till the very grave said, "It is enough." The plague spread throughout the empire, till almost every mother in the realm grieved that it had not been her destiny to live and die childless.

Thus we saw the legitimate fruits of infidelity, and this experiment, strange as it may seem, has stabbed the vitals of that monster. No nation will again make the experiment of becoming happy by the aid of infidelity. All are receiving the Bible, and it will soon be read in every language under heaven. Thus means are employed apparently the most contrary to the design which is accomplished.

6. Another source of mystery is the amazing *disparity* between the cause and the effect. An arrow shot at a venture, entered between the joints of the harness and slew the despot of Israel. A shepherd's boy, with a sling and a stone, gained Israel a victory over the army of Philistia. When Voltaire was a schoolboy, who could see any connection between him and the plague of infidelity that desolated the French empire. When Alexander and Wellington were in their cradles who could predict that they were to wade in triumph through the carnage of Waterloo. The British government laid a duty upon one article of export to her American colonies, and it resulted in our independence. A little captive maid directed Naaman to Elisha, and convinced the court of Syria that there was a God in Israel. So the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands, will yet become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. How is it possible that we should not

seem surrounded with mystery, while we inhabit a world where the greatest events are thus constantly resulting from causes which are too small to claim any relationship to those events. Inattentive to what is passing, the *event* breaks in upon us while yet the *cause* lies hid in the profoundest obscurity.

7. The *complication* of causes and effects casts a mystery around the movements of providence. The same train of causes produces more than one effect. That which we term an *event* is often the means of some other event. In the case of Joseph, God intended to afflict and sanctify his aged father, to develope the depravity of his brethren, to cast a little light into the court of Pharaoh, to bless Joseph, to save alive his father's house, to drown the Egyptian host, and finally, and *principally* to get to himself a great name. And thus is connected with every operation of providence a great variety of events. At times we find it impossible to come at the main design, and perhaps in most cases the main design cannot be known till the assize of the last day.

8. The perpetual *variety* which God observes in the movements of his providence covers his designs with mystery.

We cannot calculate that the same causes will, with any uniformity, produce the same effects, even when all the circumstances are apparently similar. The same disease will not operate on one constitution as on another, nor on the *same* constitution at *one time* as at another. The same exposure which yesterday caused death, to-day is innocent; and the medicine which in one case checked the rage of a disease, in another has been thought to aid its operations. The same remark, which yesterday was harmless, to-day kindles

a fire not to be extinguished in half a century. Hence we can predict nothing. God seems designedly to cover himself with impenetrable darkness. His way is in the deep waters, and his footsteps unknown. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

9. We perpetually misjudge as to events, *which are happy* and which *unhappy*. Hence the mystery of the crucifixion. How could the disciples, who hoped in a Saviour that would redeem Israel from civil oppression, see any wisdom in the arrest and the murder of their master? And yet his death redeemed myriads from spiritual bondage, and from the endless miseries of the *second* death. A mother is employed during a score of months, in rearing to intelligence a lovely babe; but at the juncture when it begins to reciprocate her smiles, when it had entirely entwined her heart, had become an essential ingredient in her cup of blessings, she wakes and finds herself embracing a lump of lifeless clay. All distress and darkness, she inquires, Why did it not perish in the birth? Why could it not have died when I loved it less? Why must it live till a mother cannot survive its death? And yet perhaps this very event is the means of snatching the mother from perdition.

In one word, our *ignorance* is the principle reason why the passing events of providence are so dark. We are inadequate to judge how it becomes God to treat his people, and how his enemies. And our duty is to wait patiently till the light of a brighter dispensation dissipate the darkness of the present.

III. One word on the promise, "Thou shalt know

hereafter." This refers us to the light of the last day. Then Christ will come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. *Then* all the events of divine providence will be finished. We shall then know what was the divine purpose in every dispensation. The *cause* and the *effect* will approximate, will develope their connection, will lose their *contrariety*, will *display* their *parity*, and unfold their *intricacy*. We shall look no longer upon one distinct part of a dispensation, but shall see the whole. What was to us an infinite variety, will appear, perhaps, to have been the most perfect uniformity. Judging *then*, as God *now* does, we shall see that every event was happy. The whole series of events will be finished, and the holy universe will have nothing else to do but to wonder and adore.

Remarks.—I. The subject is calculated to render us modest and humble. In a world managed so entirely without us, where we can know so *little*, and can predict *nothing*, we have very little cause to feel ourselves of much importance, and have constant occasion to see and feel our own worthlessness.

2. And yet we are admonished by this subject to be very *circumspect* in our conduct. Insignificant as we may appear in our own eyes, or in the esteem of others, we may do incalculable mischief. There is a kind of immortality attached to all we do. Our imprudent language and misdeeds may commence a train of mischievous operations, ending in the ruin of our children and our neighbours; and we may never know the extent of the mischief till we hear them sentenced to perdition, and perhaps perish with them.

3. Let the subject encourage us to attempt the achievement of *great good*. Causes are often small and weak, and yet the effects incalculably grand and glorious. A little one, under the divine management, may become a great nation. If Mordecai had been afraid to attempt great things, the captive Jews had been extirpated, and the very palace-chamber stained with their blood. If we shrink from the labour of being useful we may die in our insignificance, and God will give to others the honour of building up his kingdom.

4. How *capacious* beyond conception must be the mind of God. Of that system of providence which we contemplate by parts, *he* takes one comprehensive view, and manages with an incontrollable sovereignty. With him time and space are nothing, no darkness can obscure his view, no cloud intercept his vision. Very obscure are our best views of him, very low our thoughts, and very poor our noblest affections. In heaven they behold his glory, and offer him better praise.

5. The subject must be full of *comfort to God's people*. The present darkness is but temporary, and the God whom they love manages the affairs of providence. They need have no fear that God will not provide for their safety and comfort. He reigns to make them happy. Their interests are identified with his own. He will guide them by his counsel, and afterward receive them to glory. There they may be delightfully employed forever in contemplating scenes, which now perhaps fill them with alarm. The danger will then be over, the wilderness and the sea behind, while in *prospect* there will be spread out a boundless and a blissful Palestine. But this consolation belongs only to the true believer. The hypocrite will not arrive at

heaven. To him the present darkness will continue, and become more and more dense forever.

Finally, this subject offers no comfort to the enemies of God. At present he may prosper them, but they can have no hope that he loves them. They are forming a character for the judgment, and when that character is fully formed they will go to their own place. The mischief they have done will all be remembered, and they will receive the due reward of their deeds. They can hope for no brighter day than the present. The promise in the text does not reach their case, till by repentance they change their character. It reads in the page of inspiration, and is a dreadful line, "Darkness shall pursue his enemies." The same cloud that lighted the tents of Jacob, cast impenetrable darkness into the camp of the enemy. While God's people are destined to emerge from the present darkness, it will thicken about the enemies till they shall find themselves involved in the blackness of darkness forever.

SERMON XXI.

THE LOITERER AT THE VINEYARD.

Matt. xx. 6.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

The text is from the story of the vineyard, where labourers were hired at the different hours of the day, and where some were found idle even at the eleventh, and were set to work in the vineyard. Thus is illustrated the great work which we all have to do, and the importance that we be about it early. The object of introducing this parable was to induce men to think. When men will begin to think, a very important object is gained; this thought, however, must result in *feeling*, or nothing radically important is effected. And when men feel they must *act*, or nothing is done to any lasting or important purpose. And even then the grand design of the gospel is not answered unless men act from right motives. If men suppose that God thus pushes his demands too far, they have only to be told that every human parent demands all this of his child.

But many fatally mistake the grand design of the gospel and of life, and suppose that some external morality is all that God requires. What then is the chief end of man? This is not a mere child's question; but should be put to the youth, to the middle aged, and the man of gray hairs. We should put it to ourselves in the morning and in the evening, and seven times a day. It should be written over the posts of our doors, and worn as a signet upon the breast. It is a question of

the mightiest import We learned the answer when children, have we to this day understood is import? In the sacred volume the question is ably and eloquently answered. "God has made all things for himself." He is an infinite ocean of excellence, of wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness, and truth. He was eternally inclined to communicate his happiness to creatures. If, therefore, he act according to his nature, he will make creatures happy. Intending thus to act, he created angels with great capacities to contain the overflowings of his goodness. He made man, also, to share in the same bliss, and join the angels in a general song of praise. Having made these immortal beings, he began to make himself known to them, that they might begin their joy. He opened before them the treasures of his grace, and invited them to partake and be happy. To us, he has revealed himself in the volume of nature. The whole creation glows with the beams of his love. In the still richer volume of his hand, we have his character in fairer lines. There are delineated the features of immaculate beauty.

This, then, is the great business of life, to know and love our Creator, and Benefactor, and Preserver. If we already know something of his excellent glory, and in some measure love him, our present business is to know him better and love him more.

Another part of our work is to promote the knowledge and love of him in others. Is *any immortal mind* benighted, it is our work to find access to it, and through some opening, introduce the light of heavenly truth. Is *any heart* hardened by sin, it is our work to place it beneath the droppings of the cross, and let it there dissolve. It is our work to spread out before it the character of God, and give it opportunity, by our trans-

forming view, to be changed to love. Believing God to be an infinite fountain of good, which constantly overflows, our business is to open channels of communication, that it may flow out and bless the world. In one word, this is our business, we are to use our time, our influence, our wealth, our *every talent* in the grand business of causing God to be known and loved. *This is the chief end of man.*

This is the work which every man must do, or God will accuse him of standing idle. It is not the business of ministers only. None in heaven, earth, or hell, are exempt. God has not made one creature, that can be spared from his work. Could he have spared the instrumentality of a single creature which he has made, that creature would not have been made. He would not have moulded that body, he would not have infused that immortal spirit to be a mere cumbrance to creation.

No one can be excused. Not an angel can be spared, not a man must be unemployed, not a devil but must advance his praise. God must be known and loved. Are there not some of my dear readers who have not yet began this work? It is to no purpose, that you have been industrious, it is to no purpose that you have spent anxious days and restless nights, it is to no purpose that you have heard many sermons, and attempted many prayers; it is to no purpose that you have fed the poor, and clothed the naked, and led moral lives; if you have neglected the divine glory, you have done nothing in the account of God.—Will conscience now do its office, do any of you feel willing to acknowledge, that as yet you have done nothing?—To you, then, I propose one short question,—"*Why stand ye here all the day idle?*"

I. Is it because *you know not what you have to do!* Not one of you can make this plea, you have had the

Bible in your hands from your infancy. If you have neglected to read it, or if you have willingly misunderstood its meaning, it is nevertheless true, that God has given you a revelation of his will, in his word. The parts of that sacred book which your memory retains, bears daily testimony against you.

You have listened to a preached Gospel. The ambassadors of Christ have often pressed upon you, your duty. They have searched the Scriptures, and told you the will of God. One after another has been sent, till by their united efforts, unless you have absented yourself from the house of God, they have explained your whole duty. From Sabbath to Sabbath, they have taken their stand in the sacred desk, and have published in your ears their heavenly message. Not only on the Sabbath, but on other days have you been invited. Scarcely, since you left your cradle, has the Gospel trump ceased to vibrate upon your ear, and God will have kept the whole account.

Many of you have enjoyed the instructions of pious parents; parents who have laboured from year to year, with many discouragements, and many tears, to impress your minds with a conviction of truth and duty. They have spoken of these things to you, "when they sat in the house, and when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up," with all the tenderness of anxious love, have they pressed upon you, your obligations to your God, and your dying Saviour.

Some of you have had other friends, who have been faithful to your souls. Perhaps the wife of your bosom has awakened you in the midnight hour, to tell you, that you was sleeping on the margin of the pit. Perhaps a brother or a sister has wept over you, and plead wth you to be reconciled to God.

Had you enjoyed *none* of these means, you still might have known your duty. You might have learned much of God from the works of nature! For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. The very heathen are without excuse. Even the knowledge of God which they may acquire, would render them capable of serving him. What excuse, then, will there be for *you!* Indeed, the African and Hindoo can tell you, that your ignorance will furnish you no excuse.

You know that there is one only living and true God, who is your Creator, and whom you ought to love and serve; assured that you are giving up your plea of ignorance as untenable, I again ask, "*Why stand ye here all the day idle?*"

II. *Is it because it is not an important work, to which you are called!* You suppose it, then, of small importance whether *God be honoured*, or whether *you or your fellow-creatures be happy*. So it seems, then, of no importance, that, what was God's object in creating you, should be accomplished! Should he think it of sufficient importance to induce him to create you, and will you think it too trifling an object to engage your attention! Can you possibly think it of no importance, that God be known and loved by his creatures? God himself is happy in being known and loved. Herein he acts out his nature, and continues his own immortal blessedness. Where, then, can be an object half so grand!

The creatures of God can never be happy, except by knowing and loving him. In no other way, did ever men or angels enjoy true bliss. And it seems you are regardless, whether they are happy or not. Are you,

then, willing that heaven should cease to be a place of joy and songs! Are you willing, in wanton cruelty, to tear away the angels' harps! Are you regardless whether any of your fellow-creatures ever again feel the transports of holy love! If so, pray tell me where is your benevolence.

In saying that the work is not important to which you are invited to attend, you implicitly say, that your own salvation is not important. Is it, then, unimportant that you have God for your friend! In times of affliction, when you will be sinking under the pressure of grief, will it be of no importance to you, whether you have a God to support you! In the hour when you die, can you grapple with the monster alone! Can you pass undismayed through the shadow of death, without any divine conductor! Is it a matter of indifference to you, whether you die under the curse of the law, or under the smiles of a pardoning God! When with your dying breath you cry, "*Lord, Lord, open unto me!*" are you willing to hear him say, "*Depart, I never knew you!*" In the morning of the resurrection, would it not give you joy, to have the Saviour meet you at the grave, and bear you home to your Father's presence! In the day of judgment, would you not be glad to have Christ for your advocate! Would you not wish to hear the transporting sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter into the joy prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" Would you not wish to be on the right hand of the judge! And when slow eternity is rolling away its ages, would you not rejoice to sit among the redeemed, and help them sing the song of Moses and the Lamb! Is it not, then, an important work to which God invites you! I hear

you say, *it is.* "*Then why stand ye here all the day idle!*"

III. *Is it because it is an unreasonable work?* What then was ever *reasonable?* You are required to attend to the business for which you were made, the business for which God designed you, for which he has prepared you. He made you for himself, and now only requires that you serve him. He gave you the faculties you possess, and now only requires you to use them as he directs. He constantly feeds and clothes you; and now only asks you to devote that life, which he makes his care, to his service. How could you possibly be better employed, than in serving and loving God? Where is there an employment so grand, so worthy an immortal creature? The angels are thus employed, and esteem it an honour. They think it reasonable, that their noble powers should be engaged in the service of God. And yet is it possible that *you* should think it *unreasonable?*

Is it unreasonable that you should make exertions for the salvation of your *fellow-creatures?* Their happiness is worth as much as yours. In heaven they would rejoice as loud as you; in everlasting burnings they would be as miserable as that immortal spirit of yours. They, as well as you, are destined to live forever in joy or misery. You would think it reasonable that they should make exertions to promote your happiness, then why not you to promote theirs? Can one, possessed of real compassion, look upon a world ignorant of God, under the curse of his law, going down to people the regions of eternal despair, and feel no distress, and make no exertions to save them!

But there is another thought which I hope will come home to your hearts. You are called to make exertions

for your own salvation. Is it not reasonable that you attend to this matter? Who will attend to it, if you neglect it? This is your seed-time, and if you misimprove it, must you not expect to "beg in harvest, and have nothing?" Is it not a shame that you should make no exertion for yourself, when heaven, and earth, and hell, are anxious for you? God contrived a way for your salvation, Christ died to redeem you, angels flew to bear the tidings of mercy and to minister to the heirs of salvation, the saints in glory wait for the news of your conversion, and saints on earth are praying for you, and pleading with you, devils are anxious to keep you out of heaven.—All this anxiety, and you none for yourselves! Tell me any thing *under God's heavens* more unreasonable, than this want of concern about your own salvation.

Is there any unreasonable sacrifice that religion would require of you? You are required to renounce your sins, to take up your cross, and follow Christ. And now, in all this, what do you sacrifice? For every thing you relinquish, you shall receive a hundred fold in this life. For your hatred you will have love, for your pride, humility, for your stupidity a lively sense of divine things, for your selfishness, a warm regard for the welfare of others, for Egyptian darkness, you will have the light of life, for your sinful companions, you shall have the warm friendship of saints and angels, for the regions of death, you shall have the fields of light. Where, then, is the unreasonable sacrifice? Is there none? then "WHY STAND YE HERE ALL THE DAY IDLE!"

IV. Do you reply, *there is time enough yet!* This excuse is the most fatal ever offered; while others have

slain their thousands, this has slain its tens of thousands. He that resolves to neglect religion to-day, will be likely to neglect it to-morrow, and again the next day, and so on forever. But let me fairly understand the excuse. Do you mean that you have not sinned long enough? that it will be *better* or *easier* to begin the work to-morrow? that it would be painful to be a Christian *too soon!* That you have more time than you need to prepare for heaven! that God will excuse you from beginning his work to-day, or that he will not cut you off, should you yet continue in your sins! *One* of these must have been the ground of this excuse, let us look at each of them in order.

Do you think that you have not yet continued in your sins long enough! And how long is it since you began to rebel against God? With some of you it is ten years, is not this a long time? *Ten years* in the ranks of rebellion, is a distressing length of time. All that time God has been dishonoured, his work neglected, and your soul impoverished. All that time you have had no God, and have been miserable. You have been all that time separated from the saints, an enemy to truth, and under the curse of God, now may not ten years of such misery suffice? Alas! I fear there are some of my readers who have been *twenty*, and *thirty*, and *forty*, and *sixty years*, in all this misery, and is not *this* enough!!

Do you think the work will be easier to begin to-morrow? This is a mistake, your heart will then be harder. It will have resisted the influence of one more sermon. You will have more sin to repent of. God will be more angry with you. The grand enemy will have you more completely within his power, and you will be nearer the margin of the pit. Every mo-

ment makes the work harder. Every moment increases the probability that you may never be a child of God.

Why will it be *better* to begin your work to-morrow? You will then be one day back forever. You can never be so happy as though you had begun to-day. If the soul be capable of eternal progression in happiness, then one day lost, puts it that much behind in its heavenly career. You will then have less time to do good in the world. In that case your death-bed will be more gloomy. You will have less time to give evidence of your piety. You will have less time to conquer your sins. There never will be a day so favourable for beginning your work as to-day.

Do you think it would be painful to be a Christian any longer than is absolutely necessary? And do you, then, suppose the Christian miserable! Is it painful to be the friend of God! To be a joint-heir with Christ! To have free access to a throne of grace! To have your name enrolled in the book of life! To have your sins forgiven! To have a Saviour's smiles! Did Enoch, or Elijah, or Samuel, or David, find it unpleasant to walk with God! My Christian friends, do you find it unpleasant! I am certain that every Christian in Europe, and Asia, and Africa, and America, would unite their testimony in saying, that they never felt joy till they became the friends of God.

Do any of you suppose *that you have more time than you need*, in order to prepare for heaven? This will appear not to be the fact if you realize what must be done. Old habits are to be uprooted, and new habits formed; the unruly passions subdued; a knowledge of truth acquired, and all the Christian graces implanted. We are naturally very ignorant of heavenly things, and

are chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. "Sanctify them through thy truth." Now all who calculate to reach heaven, will need time to do all this. The oldest believer will tell you, that he shall hardly be ready when his Master comes. The youngest child, then, should not put off the work of repentance a moment.

Will God excuse you from beginning the work to-day? He will not. He is angry with the youngest sinner for having hated him so long. His uniform language is "to-day if you will hear his voice," "Now is the accepted time." His demand of your heart is founded on his right to you, and the glories that are in himself to charm you. He will not excuse any creature from loving infinite beauty and glory. He will not excuse you an hour, for this would be to license sin for that hour, and giving up his rights for that hour. He views himself as deserving not merely the service you can render him after to-morrow, but the additional glory you can do him to-day.

And if any hope that God will not destroy them if they put off his service till to-morrow, that hope has not the truth of God for its foundation. There is no promise of God that secures life to the sinner for an hour. And if he lives, he cannot be sure then of an offer of mercy. This very day God may give you over to hardness of heart and blindness of mind, the man who is intending to be his servant to-morrow. Many a sinner has dropped into the grave in the very act of postponing the concerns of his soul. Oh! say not, there is yet time sufficient.

While there is the spirit of postponement there is no advance made even in conviction, or if there should be some conviction, this spirit would destroy it all in an hour.

To say the least, the mind is not deeply impressed while any future day can be set to turn to the Lord, or even a future hour. The heart in this case is still wedded to its idols. He that would follow Christ when he had bid farewell to those that were at home, and he that would first bury his father, were both in the gall of bitterness. We must be brought up to that tone of feeling that spurns postponement, else it is certain that there is no very deep impression of any sacred truth. We exhibit awful proof, if this is the state of our minds, that we are in the gall of bitterness, and under the bonds of iniquity.

Remarks.—1. The sinner who has long been accustomed to hear and repel these sacred truths of God; and who is still unmoved and unawakened, has reason to fear that *God may be about to take the offer back.* I cannot have a doubt but he does thus treat hardened sinners. And in all this he does just as men do when occasion requires. For example, one merchant makes an offer to another, which he leaves with him an hour, in that time the article that he proposed to sell or buy falls or rises in the market, and the offer is immediately withdrawn. At any moment till the proposal is accepted, it may be withdrawn. So God, at any moment till the instant of the sinner's acceptance of his mercy, may quit making the offer, and then the sinner's doom is sealed forever. Then is fulfilled that awful text, "He flattereth himself in his own eyes till his iniquities are found to be hateful." Oh! it would be a thousand times better for him now if he could die a heathen, and lay his bones in some dark, idolatrous land, than to go down to hell from a Christian territory, where he had the word of the Lord, line upon line, and precept upon precept.

2. How horrid will be those regrets with which the sinner will review all this on the bed of death, and onward through a tardy and thinking eternity. He cannot but remember how often he was invited to enter and labour in the vineyard of the Lord, and how tender, and how tearful, and pressing were many of these invitings. I have supposed that the sinner must be forever thinking all this over, and recounting every new moon and every Sabbath day, the years and the ages of misery that still remain till he has paid the debt.

And not merely will he regret that he lost so *much time*, but that he has lost the *best* time. He has lost the morning of life. How promptly might his great work have been done, and all done, and time to spare, if he had gone into the vineyard at the rising of the sun. He might have been now a tall and shining spirit in the fields of light, and might have vied with angels in every song they sing, and in every excursion of love with which they fill up the lustrums of their blissful eternity. Their youth will be *renewed* in heaven, but not so in the dark world, their age will grow older, and their very youth be haggard. Oh, could you see a spirit that has writhed one thousand years under the regrets of the pit, and sighed, and wept, and groaned, under the withering blasts that have been spending their fury upon his soul, you would see the most blighted and pitiable wretch in all the creation of God.

This *sight* may you never see,
This *wretch* may you never be.

Even should you hereafter see the kingdom of God you must be the subject of deep chagrin that you did not enter earlier. Then you might have had more time to labour, and your Master might have reaped through you a larger revenue of praise. One would re-

gret, if regrets may be in heaven, that he should have been called home before he had time to shine bright, and rise high in the school of Christ below. If in such circumstances one might reach heaven he would wish an opportunity to weep before he begun his everlasting song.

3. The invitation is not one to *pain*, or *danger*, or *misery*. One would think that the invitation to labour in the vineyard must be an invitation to *misery*, in one shape or another, and not to *blessedness*, but the fact is, that the work is that which blesses the soul beyond any other. If you find one with nothing to do, just set him at the service of the Lord in his vineyard, and you make him happy. Let him do whatsoever his hands find to do with his might, and you remove whatever was the cause of his miseries. In the work of God the body is kept in health, and the mind is put into its healthiest and happiest condition. It is a work in which life would be prolonged beyond any other condition under the heavens. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

But there are a thousand reasons, a thousand times told, why men should not permit the invitation of the text to fall but once upon their ear. Their dutiful reply should be forthwith, "I go, sir." May the Spirit of the living God set home all this upon the conscience and the heart of all my readers, and thus conduct us all safely on to the time when the Master shall come, and the reapers shall be reckoned with, and shall receive, through grace, their penny a day.

God does not call you to a painful and laborious work. Even in the work of repentance, that must begin

the service, there is nothing painful. God does not require you to unsay any thing that you have said that was right, any thing that you can think on with pleasure in the slow-moving ages of your eternity. Nor does he ask you to undo any thing but that which you never should have done. You had but one Master to serve, but one grand service to do, to bless your Maker, and honour your kind and generous Benefactor, and wait to know his will, and do whatsoever he requires. And when you had been a little time thus faithful he would have taken you to himself and made you happy in the enjoyment of himself forever in his high and holy kingdom. There was nothing that we can see in the long vista of your eternity that would have revolved around a painful hour, or brought over your bright and glorious prospect a cloud as large as a man's hand, as long as God shall live. Thus there would have opened before you a field of day, and a scene of pleasure broad as the whole period of your being. Then how sweet your immortal song would have been while you vied with angels in your ascriptions of honour and glory and power to him that loved you, and washed you from your sins in his blood.

5. And there had been no *dangers* lurking about your path. God would have given you one promise that would have spread over you a safe and broad pavilion that would have covered the whole field of the vineyard. "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." Then you might have laboured on, and won as many souls to Christ as Brainerd did, and Schwartz did, and Paul did, and then might have gone in with them, and sat down with them at the banquet of your Master. There had not been a serpent in all the field to bite, nor a storm had gathered to beat you off

from your work, and you would have sung many a song to while away the hours of toil, and finally sung the *harvest home* in accents sweet as angels use, and the hundred and forty and four thousand would have gladly joined you in shouting a loud and long amen.

6. And there is no need that I say, the labour to which you are called by the Master of the vineyard is not a service that would tire you as in the natural harvest. I do not mean to say that the body may not tire and need rest. The spirit may be willing while the flesh is weak. But the work is not of that servile character that wears out the soul. And there is a timely rest provided. And in the very field there are put the needed and the timely refreshments. "He shall drink of the brook in the way, so shall he lift up his head." Those who have laboured long in the vineyard, and have encountered many a tedious storm, many a scorching sun, and many a withering blast, will come home at the last all fresh for the rest of heaven, and will sit down and drink the wine new with their Lord at his upper table in the skies.

There all the labourers will meet and bask in everlasting sunshine by the ranges of the trees of life; and their song will be, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, and blessed be his glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen."

END OF VOL. I.

THIS BOOK MUST BE
RETURNED